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# STOKESHILL PLACE;

OR

## THE MAN OF BUSINESS.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

“MRS. ARMYTAKE,”

“MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS, &c.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:  
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

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1837.



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# STOKESHILL PLACE;

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## THE MAN OF BUSINESS.

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### CHAPTER I.

I'm going to the market-place  
I'll mountebank their loves,  
Cog their hearts from them, and come home belov'd  
By all the trades in Rome. I'll return consul,  
Or never trust to what my tongue can do.

SHAKSPEARE.

TEN days afterwards, when Margaret Barnsley, after being lifted from the carriage by the kind doctor who, according to his engagement,

accompanied her and Miss Winston from Wynnex Abbey to Stokeshill, was carried up to the sofa in her own comfortable room, the upper servants, who came curtseying and bowing into the hall to welcome her as she passed, shook their heads on their return to the housekeeper's room, protesting that their sweet young missus was wasted to a shadow. They discerned not that a far more wonderful transformation had taken place ;—that the timid girl had become a feeling woman !

How many mothers watch the progress of stature in their children, — the lengthening tresses,—the ripening form,—the progressing accomplishments, the softening manners, of their daughters ;—how few fix their attention upon the moment when the moral temperament becomes developed ; — when thought dawns in the soul, and feeling in the heart !—

After having administered the restoratives indispensable to Margaret's exhausted condi-

tion, Miss Winston quitted her for a moment, hoping she would fall into a doze. But no sooner was she alone, than the invalid began to gaze inquiringly round the room in which so large a portion of her existence had been passed. *There* stood the piano, awaiting her with its fugues and concertos,—the drawing-box with its chalks,—the eternal tapestry-frame with its worsteads and floss-silk ;—while Blair, Chapone, Graham, Trimmer, Hannah More, Fordyce, Gisborne, and a few other female classics, displayed their well-worn tomes on the shelves of her limited bookcase. All was as it had been from her childhood,—formal, dry and unexciting. But from these few objects, endeared to her by a thousand early associations, she turned to the depths of her own heart ; where a thousand emotions were already in action, like the troubles fermenting beneath the tranquil oliveyards and vineyards of Vesuvius.

Not six weeks ago, she had quitted that calm monotonous chamber, whose walls had hitherto

shut out all glimpses of her future destinies ; and already, how much had she seen,—how much did she guess of the world !—When Margaret had stepped trembling into Lady Shoreham's pony phaeton, she regarded her father (as far as she could presume to interrogate her opinions concerning him,) as a man of great influence and consideration,—owner of the fine estate of [Stokeshill ;— and an omnipotent arbiter set in authority over her. The happiest and greatest of men in Margaret's estimation, she had not conceived him to be less potential in that of the world. But she had now discovered that, under his purple and fine linen, her father's pride was smarting with the very sores of Lazarus ;—that there were moments when it became his daughter to surround him with redoubled attentions and tenderness,—moments of fretfulness arising from the rubs inflicted by society against the wounds of his festering pride.

She saw, too, that even their grandeurs at

Stokeshill, resembled those of the gorgeous Pantheon of the French capital ; which, based upon a hollow soil, sinks deeper with every acquisition of ornament ; and that the lustre of the Barnsley family served only to throw a light upon the paramount superiority of the Woodgates. It was only since her father had attained sufficient distinction to venture on standing for Westerton, that the neighbourhood had troubled itself to inquire into the history of his elevation in life.—For it *had* at length troubled itself ! All the idle records it could rake together to enliven the dry details of an election, had been industriously brought forward to humiliate the opponent of Sir Henry Woodgate ; and, though while John Barnsley was contented to be little, they had chosen to consider him great ; the moment he aspired to be great, they chose to prove him to be little. But, as Richard Dobbs loudly protested, “ they meant no offence ;—it was all fair at an election.”

Indignant at all she gathered of the indignities heaped upon him, Margaret trusted that the ingratitude he was experiencing, would at least render him less prompt for the future in sacrificing his time and comfort to the advantage of other people ; that he would be less at Westerton,—less at Maidstone—less at Canterbury,—more at home. She would endeavour to render herself a companion worthy of him. She would overcome her timidity,—would strive to converse on topics interesting to him, and obtain Miss Winston's permission to devote herself to a course of reading qualifying her for his society. He should not be allowed to feel the loss of Hawkhurst and the Sullivans, or the vile ingratitude of Lord Shoreham. They were rich, independent, happy ;—they might surely travel—surely amuse themselves at home—without requiring the society of lords who despised them, and whom perhaps they had some right to despise.

To London, be it observed, Margaret Barns-

ley referred not, even in her most secret self-communing ; for *there* she suspected lay the source of her father's secret disappointment. On succeeding to his wife's fortune, he had been wise enough to recognize its insufficiency for the fulfilment of any ambitious projects of distinction, in a metropolis so opulent as London ; and had settled, in consequence, in a country neighbourhood, where five or six thousand a-year confer local importance and rural nobility. But though conscious that a plain John Barnsley, with John Barnsley's income, was nobody in the parishes of St. James or St. George, he felt that John Barnsley, Esq. M.P., would become a personage even in the presence of royalty itself. He felt this, and waited !—London was neither renounced nor forgotten ;—it was deferred. It was there he intended to grow grey ; it was there he intended to witness the elevation of his daughter. If all was true that Margaret had heard and suspected, it was there his paternal pride had luxuriated in the chimera of

seeing her presented at Court as Viscountess Shoreham!—

But these castles in the air had vanished from his view. Although every night on his arrival at Wynnex after the tedious labours of the day, of canvassing, conferring, chaffering, surmising, disputing, he continued to assert himself sure of his election,—that Messrs. Harpenden and Hill were sure of it,—that Hill had travelled eleven hundred miles to bring up succours of outvotcrs,—that if money could do his business, it would be done,—Margaret saw, from the depression of his voice, the lengthening of his face, the abstraction of his air, that his hopes were diminishing; or that, if still confident of attaining his object, the means had become distasteful. Reduced to the humiliation of being proposed by Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, seconded by an oratorical tallow-chandler (whose name of Wright was moralised by Closeman into a thousand puns) while Woodgate was proposed by Lord Henry

Marston, seconded by brazier Timmins and supported by all the leading families of the neighbourhood, the first day's polling had been in his favour. But the second gave to Sir Henry a majority of thirty-five: and most people thought it a superfluous, or perhaps malicious waste of money, that Barnsley chose to keep it open for a third day's struggle. Margaret was every moment expecting the arrival of a message confirming old Mrs. Molyneux's prognostications of Sir Henry's triumph. She felt that even her father had made up his mind to such a result, from his having suddenly rescinded his former orders, and proposed her removal from Wynnex in the course of the day,—evidently unwilling to have her under the roof of his ungrateful ward at such a moment; or to expose himself, in visiting her there, to the chance of an encounter with the new member for Westerton. He wished her to be at home at the crisis of their public humiliation.

For with Wynnex Abbey, that humiliation was more especially connected. Lord Shoreham, though so far swayed by the laws of decency as to avoid appearing in *overt* opposition to the man by whom his lands and tenements, his flocks and herds, had been an hundred-fold increased, not only positively declined to come forward as his nominator, but lent a scarcely disguised countenance to the rival member. He was known to be with Sir Henry Woodgate in the spirit. Without Mr. Sullivan's pretext of consanguinity to attach him to the red banner, or Mr. Sullivan's motives of resentment to detach him from the blue, he was the mainspring of the Hawkhurst Committee,—his shallow affectation of neutrality was belied by every word and action.

“ How galling will it be henceforth to my poor father to live among all these people,—so long regarded as his friends and allies!”—thought Margaret, as she reclined upon her couch by the fire-side. “ The Sullivans turned

to bitter enemies,—the Shorehams to convicted traitors,—Lord Whitamstead, I fear, elated into egotism by his new honours,—and even Mr. Closeman rendered more disagreeable than usual, by the self-importance with which his electioneering support will inspire him!—How *will* my father get through the winter!—On Westerton he will naturally turn his back; and alas! what can *I* do to amuse him?—If he were but fond of books,—if he were but fond of music,—if he were but fond of anything but business, — odious, tiresome, *shabby* business!”—

Fortunately for Margaret, her meditations were interrupted by the re-entrance of Miss Winston, with a cup of arrow-root, which was to be more palateable than anything Margaret had tasted since her illness; being made by the dear assiduous old Stokeshill housekeeper, with milk from the Stokeshill dairy, which Stokeshill of course believed to be the best and best-managed in the county of Kent.

“ Has any further news arrived from Westerton ?” demanded Margaret, after thanking her attentive friend.

“ None, my dear. But nurse Molyneux asked my leave to go down to the hustings ; and fancying you asleep, I would not refuse the poor woman. By the elation of her manner as she tied on her bonnet, it was evident *she* had tidings that Sir Henry’s cause is safe ; for like all the ungrateful people of Stokeshill village, her whole soul is with the Woodgates !”

“ The force of early association. The first impression on their minds was the importance of Sir Ralph Woodgate ; the next generation will feel just the same towards the Barnsleys.”

“ No ! my dear—never !—It requires centuries to establish such a moral interest as the Woodgates command here. No ! such influences will never more be established in England. There is too great an extension of trade. There are too many power-looms and cotton factories at work.”

“ You think the age has assumed too federal a character to admit of a re-concentration of the feudal principle ?”

“ *My dear !*”—demanded Miss Winston, fancying that her pupil’s head was again excited by delirious fever. “ What can you possibly mean ?”

“ You must ask Mr. Sullivan Brereton,” said Margaret, smiling. “ It is a phrase I heard him repeat eleven times on various occasions during my visit to Wynnex.”

“ Ah ! Margaret !”—sighed the good governess, taking the cup from her pupil’s hands and placing it on the table,—“ pray Heaven the lessons you have learned at Wynnex may produce no effect more injurious on your mind than the acquirement by rote of those specious axioms which have set all the nations of the world afloat, like vessels broken loose from their moorings !”

“ They have produced nothing inconsistent with my love and veneration for yourself, my

dearest friend," — said Margaret, gratefully sensible that she was indebted for her life to the more than motherly care of Miss Winston, during her late illness. " But you and I, who have been living so quietly and happily together in seclusion from the busy world, have perhaps too little notion of all that is passing there. Admit that you were not prepared for Lord Shoreham's ingratitude towards my father, or for Mr. Sullivan's vindictive persecution?"

" I was not," replied Miss Winston. " But it is always time enough for a christian to become alive to the failings of his fellow creatures. I trust Mr. Barnsley will have courage to support the vexation he has met with on this occasion."

" If this odious election had never taken place!" sighed Margaret—" if Mr. Holloway would but have believed himself sufficiently respected, without adding a coronet to his honours!"

" My dear!" resumed the good woman, who

could not altogether lay aside the governess,—“you will find that half the troubles of this world originate in our desire to rise above our equals by superficial distinctions.”

“Well!—I suppose ambition is as indispensable to keep society in motion, and mankind in progress, as the tides to the ocean,” said Margaret. “But, I must say, it has wrought more mischief in our quiet neighbourhood within the last month than five years will suffice to set at rest. How I wish my father would come home!—How I wish it was all over!”

“If Mr. Barnsley had taken warning yesterday—(when I find all Westerton saw how the thing was going),”—said Miss Winston, “he would have spared himself a day’s uneasiness. Nobody expected it of him to keep the poll open. The call upon him to come forward had not been strong enough to demand such a sacrifice!”

“I shall never set foot in the town again!”

cried Margaret, warming as she pondered upon her father's injuries. "I hope, dear Miss Winston, you will not ask me to keep up an acquaintance with that Mrs. Dobbs.—The Dobbses are the most ungrateful of all!—Not only they had been employed by papa for years; but my uncle Clement took one of the boys to be his *aid-de-camp* in India, at my father's request. Edward Sullivan often used to tell me that papa had been the making of the Dobbses."

"Young men are apt to talk roundly. Mr. Dobbs has the best business in—"

Her voice was drowned by the sudden noise of some vehicle rattling irregularly up to the house; and looking from the window, Miss Winston perceived a cart and horse galloping up the carriage-drive,—the cart crowded with the stable-servants and gardeners of Stokeshill; all waving their hats tumultuously, and shouting as loud as strong beer could make them,— "Barnsley for ever!—Barnsley for ever!—Barnsley at the head of the poll."

At the same moment the room door was gently opened ; and nurse Molyneux, gliding in, muttered with a peevish countenance,—“ Well, Miss Barnsley,—it’s all over !—Lord knows how things are gone !—But, by fair means or foul, poor dear Sir Henry’s thrown out —”

“ And my father returned ? ”—ejaculated Margaret, clasping her hands—her pale face flushed with emotion.—“ Thank Heaven !—He will now be happy ! ”

## CHAPTER II.

All those must submit to be accounted tyrants who exercise perpetual power in a state that was before free.

CORNELIUS NEPOS.

HITHERTO Margaret had borne without impatience the slowness of her recovery; but on the morrow of this day of triumph, nothing but the impossibility of the effort would have prevented her from being carried to Westerton, to witness the ceremony of her father's chairing. She who, on most occasions, could so little enter into his feelings, was fully able to comprehend the delight he must experience in having baffled his ungrateful enemies, and verified

the pledges of his new friends. She could imagine all the mortification the faction of Sullivan, Shoreham, Dobbs and Co., must be enduring.

Sir Henry Woodgate's disappointment, indeed, Margaret did not include among her father's causes of gratification ; for Sir Henry had forfeited no duty of friendship or wardship towards her father ; nor formed any undue pretension in coming forward for the representation of the borough. Amid so many offenders, Sir Henry was blameless ; and there could be no reason to triumph in his defeat. Nor did she altogether overlook his interposition in her own behalf at Wynnex Abbey ; for if somewhat ungallant in his after-desertion, he had incontestably stood her friend when others stood aloof. His position in life afforded a strong appeal to her feelings. His exile from the home of his ancestors,—his expulsion from Stokeshill,— combined with Helen Sullivan's commendations and Nurse Molyneux's ro-

mances, rendered him an object of especial interest; and Margaret trusted he might speedily obtain a seat for some other borough, in order to develop in parliament, those intellectual endowments which might be the means of restoring prosperity to the ruined family. Her filial vengeance, in short, was directed exclusively against Hawkhurst Hill and Wynnex Abbey.

It was lucky, perhaps, for Stokeshill,—her favourite Stokeshill,—that Miss Barnsley's attention had been diverted by her illness from its concurrence in their malefactions. Even her indulgence towards the legendary allegiance of the villagers to the Hand and Flower, would scarcely have sufficed to excuse the hurrahs they had shouted, and the fisticuffs they had pummelled, in the cause of the adversary of her father;—her father, whose bread nourished, and whose fuel warmed them.—For Margaret had of course been educated in the country-gentleman-like idea of the immense bond of

gratitude created by the bestowal of the lowest possible measure of wages for the greatest possible measure of labour, upon those whose birth condemns them to—

Beg their brothers of the dust  
To give them leave to toil;

having been taught by Miss Winston that the hire of a human existence at nine shillings per week, includes the purchase of all its feelings and opinions.

She did not at present know that strict justice rarely achieves popularity; that the man who measures the workhouse bread with too accurate a balance, and refrains from the Samaritan-like distribution of “good measure pressed down and running over,” *may* have his reward in a Heaven peculiarly devoted to parish-office righteousness. but never in his own parish. The Stokeshill poor saw that Barnsley kept their roads in excellent condition; that, a rigid Macadamist, when they asked for bread, he

gave them a stone; that he slipped out of church during service, to watch magisterially over their virtue by driving them out of the ale-house,—breaking his own Sabbath-day, in order to amend the sanctity of their's. But they detested him!—They thought him a hard man—a pettifogger,—a dirty-doer. They insisted that the blankets assigned to *their* poor-house were four inches less in the square than those given in the parishes of Hawkhurst and Withamstead ;—and, by universal acclamation, resolved to hang him in effigy on occasion of the defeat of Sir Henry Woodgate.

But every village has its council of war; and every council of war, from that of Æsop's beasts to the brutes of his Imperial Majesty of all the Russias, its grey-beard member, more cunning than the rest.

A certain master of the arts of hedging and ditching, yclept Job Hanson, who did not happen to be a partizan in the faction of Hawkins, Abdy and Woods, took occasion to remind his

fellow-villagers, with graphic eloquence, that, in looking to the side on which their bread was buttered, though Barnsley buttered it but little, Woodgate buttered it not at all ;—that whereas half a loaf was better than no bread, it would not do to reject the under-sized penny roll doled forth from Stokeshill Place. Upon this hint, a scarecrow already in progress to represent the new representative of Westerton, was sentenced to be devoted to the protection of Farmer Abdy's home wheat-field against the sparrows ; while Job Hanson was deputed to ascend the tower of the church, and hang out a long white table cloth crowned with a bunch of laurels,—an ensign of triumph to Barnsley and truce to his people.

These offences, though unsuspected by Margaret, were hinted to the new member himself by John the cricketing footman, who for some unexplained cause, or the mere dirtiness of lackey nature, saw fit to play the spy upon the village,—when Barnsley, his cheeks flushed

and head throbbing, threw off at night that coat in which no man in his senses would have been anxious, just then, to supersede him. It is perhaps wisely ordained by custom, that the cares of the successful candidate of a contested election are to be drowned on his night of triumph in the only thing strong enough to over-master them,—corporation punch. But little less than a hogshead would have sufficed to subdue the irritated nerves of poor Barnsley ; or tranquillize his agitation after the excitement he had undergone, previous to the bleeding he was yet to undergo. For though in the approving eye of the public, he had shaken hands on the hustings with Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, thanking them for the pains they had taken to ensure his success,—he could not obliterate from his mind the amount of the cheques they had taken simultaneously ; or that, while Dobbs and Snobbs, in throwing mud in his face, exclaimed jocosely,—“ All’s fair at an election !” Harpenden and Hill, in

the exorbitancy of their rapacity seemed to give the lie to the proverb. It struck Barnsley even in the hurry of the day, that chaises and eight might have been used at the cost vaguely assigned to the chaises and four which were bringing down votes for him from the depths of Wapping or the heights of Holborn Hill; for though Messrs. Closeman and Co. had already honoured his drafts in favour of H. and H., to the tune of three thousand, five hundred pounds, Harpenden spoke of this sum as "*on account*," as if preparatory to further demands. Five thousand pounds, probably, would scarcely cover his expenses; *his*,—who, for fifteen hundred, might have sailed majestically into the House from other ports; whereas, from Westerton, a pitiful majority scarcely seemed to entitle him to his costly seat!—Barnsley, so prudent, so almost penurious in his administration of the affairs of his ward, appeared to have gone out of his way to play the spend-

thrift in the foolish prodigality with which he managed his own.

Between the snatches of his unquiet sleep, these recollections recurred to his mind to mar his enjoyment of those honours, the object of so many years' anticipation. He had lost his friends, his acquaintances, his money, his time, to gain what (it had been hinted to him by the Dobbsites) a scrutiny might yet take away; and which the voices of the whole borough assured him he should retain only till the next dissolution.—Was this worth while?—Alas! the utmost extent of his moral arithmetic went to prove, that if from state and station you take the means of displaying them, there remains—nothing!

And the morrow!—The cruelty of the fiat “Master Barnadine, rise and be hanged!” seemed nothing in comparison with, “Mr. Barnsley rise and be chaired!”—He felt that he had been elected in opposition to the

wishes of what might be called the town ; that he had been thrust upon them by the activity of the two Hs, and the gathering together of the scattered tribes of Westertonians. Most of the out-voters, (London mechanics or men of small business or small men of business elsewhere), had returned to the place from whence they came. His oration would be performed to an audience of dissidents ; and he thought of dead cats and rotten apples, and trembled.

But it was too late for retreat. The chair adorned with its laurels and ribands, was already exhibiting in the shop of Varnish and Deal, the upholsterers, over whose door streamed a blue banner variegated with mud by the malcontents ; while the bales of blue ribbon already laid to his account by Miss Tiffany the milliner, (from whom Mrs. Timmins threatened to withdraw her custom), were in progress of augmentation by a few thousand yards more, sent for express to Maidstone the preceding night, as if all the maids of Kent,

were to be indebted for a twelvemonth to come to Barnsley for the splendour of their topknots. As the new member stood before the glass, shaving the lengthened chin of his disconsolate face, he could not but bewail the inconsistency of destiny ; which, during the last six weeks, had condemned a man exclusively devoted to business, to all the fiddle-de-dee of life ; to balls, junkets, bonfires, illuminations,— first the pleasures of the table, and now the honours of the chair.

“ Sir !”—said John, who was maliciously watching the progress of his master’s despondency, “ I hope your Honour be in good heart this morning,—for I’m feared your Honour will have but a trying day on’t. Job Hanson have been up at the Place this morning, (about stacking the wood yard) and told us as how Dobbs’s people were recruiting with good bounty money, far and near, for a strong hiss at the chairing ; such a mint of money, he says, never was spent at any election since the

time Squire Woodgate, Sir Henry's uncle, was shoved to the wall." (Barnsley's face brightened at the comparison). " But to be sure, Sir, times be changed ; for nigh as Sir Henry was upon a majority, they say it hav'n't cost him not a tithe part of what's gone out of your Honour's pocket. Farmer Hawkins up at Longlands, he have undertaken to clear Sir Henry out and out, for a matter of eight hundred pound. *His* woters was all residents."

Barnsley's face grew black as the stock which the footman was buckling on.

" If so be I might make bold to give a bit of advice," resumed John, watching in the glass into which he peeped over his master's shoulder, to watch the effect produced by his communications,—" I could wenture to say as it would be worth while to give the constable a bit of a tip, to keep near your Honour's person, during the ceremony ; for from somethin' Job overheard as he was a-passing the Winchelsea

Arms, he do think there'll be a sort of a plot a-carrying on."

"A plot?"—reiterated Barnsley, thinking of nothing less than the gunpowder and Guy Fawkes. "Do they want to blow me up?"

John, though almost as much of a wag as Squire Closeman, was forced (in regard to the subordination of his cloth) to resist the retort that rose to his lips, of "Lord, Sir, hav'n't you had blowing up enough from them already?"—and simply replied—"Bless you Sir, no!—all they wants is to blow you *down*. They're getting up somethin' of a sham chairing that's all; and heads is so hot at elections, that it will be hard if some on 'em doesn't get broke on sich a 'casion. Would your Honour wish me to speak to the constables?"—

"I have already promised them handsome remuneration," said Barnsley. "It was I who procured John Scraggs and Isaak Ray their places, during Mr. Closeman's mayoralty; so I fancy I am pretty sure of them. But it will

be as well, perhaps, for my own people to keep as close to me as possible. As soon as the carriage is put up, you, the coachman, and Robert, must be on the alert at the Old Angel; and you can take Gregory and the helper with you, in the coachman's and Robert's second liveries. As many as possible of the Stokeshill servants ought to appear on such an occasion."

"To be sure, Sir,—if the liveries was any thing of a fit. Then there's Bill Scraggs, John's brother, what's been took into the garden, would just fit the old coat as hangs in the hall, what belonged to William, groom, as left in the spring," said John, taking the opportunity to hint to his master the contempt entertained by his people towards the penuriousness which had defrauded said William of his all but due. "Would you like Scraggs to go along with the rest?"—

"Yes!—no!—ask Lawton," said his master, who had now reached the chamber door. "Let the carriage be ready by the time I have

swallowed a cup of tea. The new harness and the leopard's skin hammer-cloth,—(it is cold enough for the fur hammer-cloth I think). The servants can have the cart and the bay horses. Robert is to ride Smiler, and attend me to open the gates."

" Do you return here, Sir, to dress for the dinner at the Angel?"

" I sha'n't have time ; the chairing's to be at two o'clock, the dinner at four ; I have fifty visits to pay between. So put my things into the carriage. I shall at least find a moment at the Angel to change my coat."

" No doubt you will, now you're a parliament man," muttered John with a grin, after his master closed the door, and proceeded, pondering over John's intelligence, to take leave of his daughter ; like some great Roman general, on the eve of departure to the field.

Could Barnsley have abstracted his attention from the littlenesses of worldly interest to that which he deemed insignificant, the workings of

human affection, he might have been repaid even then, for the defection of Lord Shoreham and the vindictiveness of Sullivan, by the beautiful expression of filial tenderness in Margaret's eyes, as they beamed upon her ill-used father. Her tears were ready to start when he reminded her that he should see her no more till the next day, and at the moment of his hurried kiss, she reflected upon the vexations he might have to undergo before that salutation, to him a mere ceremony, was repeated ;— and they burst forth in reality when, about an hour afterwards, she heard his chariot-wheels grinding along the park road towards Westerton.

“ Well ! things come strangely about in this world,” mused Miss Winston, who from the window was watching his pompous departure ; and albeit unused to much exercise of the organs phrenologically denominated of causality and comparison, she could not refrain from putting the new member for Westerton, “ John

Barnsley Esq. M.P. of Stokeshill Place," into contrast with the smug clerk to whom her first introduction had occurred, while handing Miss Francis from a glass coach in John Street, Adelphi; and who had commenced his initiatory love-letter to her fair charge with "Here-with I hand you," and the offering of a Tunbridge-ware netting box.—Times were, indeed, altered with John Barnsley.

In the course of another hour, Margaret had little difficulty in persuading her governess that, as nurse Molyneux resolutely refused to witness the celebration of Sir Henry Woodgate's defeat, it would be but a becoming respect towards her father for Miss Winston to occupy the window which Mrs. Harpenden had officially written to offer; and as Mr. Squills, who was proceeding to the field of action, volunteered to drive her to Westerton, the governess acceded to Margaret's entreaties. It was worthy of remark how much importance had been acquired by Margaret during her recent

danger in the eyes of poor Miss Winston. It was now *her* will that was beginning to decree, *her* opinion to influence. The governess seemed to think she could not sufficiently repay her goodness in surviving !

Kind and considerate as she was, however, Margaret longed to be alone. Convalescence is a moment peculiarly propitious to reverie ; and she lay on her couch, musing on past, present, and to come, with her eyes closed, and the County Chronicle open in her hand. She had been perusing Sir Henry Woodgate's speech on the hustings the preceding day ; which, being in reply to some cutting observations of her father, could not be a cut and dry concoction of the Hawkhurst committee. Her spirit was roused by the noble sentiments it embodied. She no longer wondered that Helen Sullivan was his advocate. After dwelling with sympathy and admiration upon the eloquence of Woodgate, she was mortified to observe the poverty of her father's language

and the inconclusiveness of his logic. She saw that he had cut a poor figure; and intense was the disgust with which she next proceeded to the vulgar threadbare jokes of his partizan, Mr. Closeman.

There was the report of a second speech from the young baronet, occupying only a few lines,—the speech in which, after the closing of the poll, he took leave of his supporters. Margaret had not thought it possible to comprehend in so small a space, the characteristics of rightness of mind, elegance of taste, and above all of a certain tone to which, whether as regards an equipage, a bow, or a speech in parliament, we assign the vague term of gentlemanly. No person could have given his attention to Sir Henry's farewell words, without feeling that he was listening to a gentleman; she felt she would rather her father had made that speech, than be returned member for Westerton.

Except indeed as regarded the momentary

gratification of his pride, Margaret discerned in his triumph only motives of regret. His success would not remove one of the obstacles to his future good understanding with his neighbours ; and as none were present to dive into her reflections, she presumed even to doubt whether her father would shine in parliament. With all a woman's predilection for orators and oratory, Margaret knew not how to estimate the value of a man of business, a good committee man, compared with that of a mother of magnanimous nothings. Her notions of honourable members were derived from great letter applause. The tariff of comparative merit existent in the views of premiers or speaker, did not present itself to her inexperience.

In point of fact, she dwelt perhaps more upon the parliamentary promise of Sir Henry Woodgate, than was altogether dutiful or becoming. Her attention had been powerfully arrested ere his very name was known to her, by the harsh loftiness of his manners ; a lofti-

ness distinguished from that of Mr. Sullivan as being grounded upon superiority of abilities instead of mere superiority of birth. Sullivan was proud of his ancient descent, as all in all sufficient: Woodgate, of the elevation of mind which he regarded as the indispensable illustration of illustrious ancestry. In Margaret's limited acquaintance with society, he was the best example of the masculine character. Lord Shoreham was ignoble in all his ideas and ambitions.—Brereton a solemn coxcomb.—George Holloway a lump of clay,—and Edward Sullivan a lump of sugar. Sir Henry alone bore the impress of a man of genius; the misfortunes of his family affording an excuse for the surlineness of his hauteur. She ventured to conjecture what modification of this surlineness might be produced by a favourable change in his circumstances; by a restoration to the fortunes and estates of his family; by a realization (if the whole truth must be told) of the romantic project of the gossips of Westerton;

and what joy to pour balm into the wounds of such a bosom ;—to afford a prop to the sapling springing from a tree so noble !

Two letters, placed in her hand by the old nurse who had so inadvertently afforded her food for meditation, roused her from her trance ; the one from her friend Helen Sullivan, the other from her respectable neighbour Lady Withamstead. Both contained congratulations ; but Helen's something more.

“ I am sure, my dear Margaret,” she wrote, “ that your good sense must appreciate the motives of delicacy which prevent my mother, just now, from inquiring in person how you have borne your removal from Wynnex, and what progress you are making towards recovery. She desires me to express our united hope, that when the irritations produced by, or producing, this unlucky contest shall have subsided, all will be as before among us ; or if not, (for where the male half of the human kind is concerned, who can calculate upon probabi-

lities?) that you will believe in our undiminished regard and affection. My mother is not implacable against Mr. Barnsley, nor I against yourself, for your rejection of Edward's precipitate proposals; and as he seems to be shooting away his disappointment in Norfolk, instead of staying to shoot himself at Hawkhurst, I think it will not be long ere we mutually congratulate him on his perfect recovery of his senses.

“ Of this I shall shortly judge, as we are about to join him at Buckhurst. Mamma’s health, I grieve to say, is more delicate than ever; and my aunt Grantville is eager to have her under the care of her family physician. When we return, dear Margaret, may we enjoy some happy days together before I go to town for the season! Brereton is with the Drewes, at Tynemouth Castle; where Sir Henry Woodgate is about to join the Wynnex party.

“ Accept, dear Margaret, my mother’s love and mine, and present our compliments to your

good Miss Winston, whom during your illness we fully learned to appreciate."

This was a cheering letter for Margaret.— Though satisfied that things never could be again as they had been, it was something to know that Helen and her mother were as kindly inclined towards her as ever; and her joy in the perusal of it, put her in good spirits to receive that of "Lady Withamstead."

It was clear that the good old woman wanted to be very condescending, if she did but know how; and her hopes and trusts that Mr. Barnsley and his daughter would not be less frequent visitors at Withamstead than they had always been, proved her of opinion that there was more distance between them as lord and squire, than as squire and squire; for with respect to the election, Holloway had strictly kept to the neutrality affected by Lord Shoreham,—prolonging his visit in Shropshire to avoid entanglements on either side. Lady Withamstead terminated her formal

recipe-like epistle with the expression of a wish that the first visit paid by Margaret, after her recovery, might be to Withamstead Hall ; and it was plain that her only regret in presenting to Miss Barnsley the best respects of “ her young people,” was the impossibility of setting them forth with all their new dignities, as “ the Hon. Misses Holloway.”

## CHAPTER III.

Tully says that “ it is the greatest of wickedness to lessen your paternal estate ;” and if a man would but consider how much worse than banishment it must be to his child to ride by the estate which should have been his, he would be smitten with this reflection more deeply than can be understood by any but one who is not a father.

STEELE.

So much having been said of the Barnsleys, it is time that something should be known of Sir Henry Woodgate ;—to whom these latter misfortunes of Stokeshill were in some degree attributable.

Sir Henry, great grandson of old Sir Ralph, was two years old at the period his father attained his majority and annihilated the entail of the property ;—being the offspring of a boyish marriage between Richard the son of Sir Richard, and Clara d'Esterre, an almost portionless ward and relative of the old baronet. Young Woodgate, renounced by his family, and without the means of maintenance for his wife and child, consented to give the necessary signatures in order to preserve these two helpless beings from destitution ; and the sacrifice was fully repaid ; for he did not two years survive the event, having fallen in the very first action in which his regiment was engaged, after disembarking in the peninsula. Little Harry and his young mother would consequently have been left without any other provision than the small pension of a cornet's widow, but for the reconciliation her husband's concessions had extorted from Sir Ralph and his son.

Affording an unhappy illustration of the evil

influence of the feudal system, the Woodgates had for centuries past contemplated nothing in the world but themselves and their belongings,—Stokeshill, and their family pride. Stokeshill was gone,—their pride alone remained to them; and this it was, rather than any benevolent feeling, which determined Sir Richard,—(for old Sir Ralph survived the break-up of the family even a shorter space than his grandson), to bestow a home upon the widow and orphan. Stokeshill Place was not yet disposed of. Every other acre of the family property was sacrificed immediately on the destruction of the entail; but they clung to Stokeshill; and even after levies and executions rendered it impossible to retain possession, circumstances seemed to oppose their departure. No purchaser could be found for an estate having a very involved title, the mansion on which, required as great an outlay for reparation, as might have produced a handsome modern house; and little Harry was nearly five years

old, when his grandfather at length signed, sealed and delivered the deed, and Barnsley the purchase money, which completed the transfer of Stokeshill.

At the period of Harry's arrival there, the family consisted of his grandfather Sir Richard, Lady Woodgate the venerable widow of Sir Ralph, and Agnes the only sister of his unfortunate father. To Mrs. Woodgate, these relations were fully known, her orphan childhood having been passed at Stokeshill Place; and she entertained an equal indifference towards Sir Richard, (a man soured by mortifications,) his venerable and benevolent mother, and Agnes, who, in the earlier ages of the house would have been a nun, pensive and holy, and even now, amid all the humiliations of the Woodgates, was as a spirit of peace haunting the old manor.

To each of these generations, meanwhile, the young child, their future representative, was an object of intense interest. The old lady

seemed to hold it a sufficient merit that he would prolong the name of Woodgate, the name of her husband and his ancestors, among future generations. The peevish grandfather, putting his trust rather in the endowments of his race, than in the personal qualifications of their last offspring, looked upon the boy as destined to renovate the tarnished blazon of the Hand and Flower; while Agnes, young and tender hearted, loved him as all that remained to her of her brother, as all she had to occupy her blighted affections. Her mother had been long dead; and the deference-demanding age of her grandmother, and petulance of her mopey father, formed no claims on her tenderness in opposition to those of little Harry.

Even his mother, her cousin Clara, was no rival in the affections of Miss Woodgate. Clara was of far more fiery clay, and modelled in a very different mould from her own;—a Creole, born at the Havannah, of a marriage between

Captain d'Esterre, a favourite nephew of Sir Ralph, and a Spanish lady of some distinction, who died shortly after giving her birth.

It was about the period of Sir Richard's marriage that Captain d'Esterre, desperately wounded in one of the glorious actions under Rodney, came to die under his uncle's roof; and obtained on his death-bed from Sir Ralph and the Woodgate family, a promise that his orphan girl should be reared and educated with Agnes. A few thousand pounds formed the dowry of the little Creole; whose deep-toned Spanish beauty already gave token of the charms by which, in after years, she attracted and attached the heir of impoverished Stokeshill; and as she grew to womanhood, the passions of a tropical country were seen to sparkle in Clara's radiant eyes. But unluckily more than one evil instinct was mingled with the sprightliness of her character. Her union with the last scion of the house of Woodgate was chiefly

suggested by a desire to thwart the family. Irritated by the pains they took to impress upon her mind the importance of Dick Woodgate when a schoolboy of ten years old, she had exerted herself, half-sport, half-malice, to instil a passion into his boyish heart;—a passion which grew till it made her his wife, and left her his widow.

Agnes, to whom the violence of her cousin's character was only too well known, grieved scarcely less over her brother's marriage than over his death, which so shortly followed. But when three years afterwards the young widow returned to Stokeshill, her ambitions withered, her small fortune dissipated, Miss Woodgate trusted, that instead of the hard heart being rendered harder by adversity, the distresses of the wife and the hopes of the mother might have breathed a better spirit into Clara. The beauty of the noble, dark-haired boy, her nephew, induced her to believe that the mother of so hopeful a son would be too

much absorbed in him for cabals against “the abbess and sister Agnes,” the names by which, in former days, Clara had been accustomed to designate Lady Woodgate and herself.

But Clara, though grown more wary, was not grown a jot more amiable. Her influence over the mind of old Sir Richard became as great as it had been over his son. His aged mother and gentle daughter soon became subordinates in the house. Mrs. Woodgate was at the head of every thing. Mrs. Woodgate’s opinion was to be paramount; not as the widow of his son, but as the mother of his heir. Believing that it was by her influence Dick had been persuaded to sacrifice the entail, Sir Richard felt that strong compensation was owing to her for the injury sustained by herself and her son.

The amiable Lady Woodgate bore with silent dignity having her place in the family taken from her at nearly eighty years of age,—sustained by the recollection that the blood of her beloved Sir Ralph was flowing in the veins of the imperious Creole; while Agnes, feeling

more on the high-minded old lady's account than on her own, pursued, without a murmur, her round of duties ; feeding the hungry and healing the sick of Stokeshill,—transcribing her peevish father's letters, or waiting upon the whimsies of his gout.

The affairs of the family, meanwhile, grew daily more involved under Sir Richard's mal-administration ; and when, at length, he announced that he had found a purchaser for his estate in the person of a schoolfellow of his late brother Everard, his aged mother was well content to rise and go forth into a land of strangers. Stokeshill was already desecrated in her eyes by the incursions of bailiffs and sheriff's officers. Westerton, which had rejected her son from its representation, was an eyesore to her. Kent with its white hills and green hopgardens, ceased to seem her own beloved county ; and having bound up her grey hairs under her cap, and leaning on Agnes for support, she led forth her great grandson from the

abode of his ancestors, which, for more than half a century, had been her home.

After four years of obscurity and adversity, the re-opening of the long closed continent enabled Sir Richard Woodgate to remove his family to a country where their fortunes would be ameliorated or at least their poverty pass unnoticed. Harry was then in his twelfth year, the venerable lady in her eighty-fourth; and though many sons might have scrupled at imposing upon her so great a change of habits and climate, Lady Woodgate would neither hear of being left behind, nor of affording an obstacle to projects tending to bestow a more liberal education on her grandson. Her jointure was an object in their common income; her presence a protection to Agnes; and they were soon all settled together in a commodious though gloomy old hotel at Ghent.

The resident families of ancient Belgian noblesse, though proverbially inaccessible to English travellers, relented in favour of the Woodgates. There was something so imposing

in the venerable aspect of the octogenarian grandmother, something so touching in Agnes, so striking in Mrs. Woodgate, so interesting in Harry, that they passed over the peevish insignificance of Sir Richard, and for once opened their hearts and houses to an English family, equal in caste to themselves, and depressed to the level of their own broken fortunes. The old Comte van Pierrsen, governor of Ghent, used to say that the Woodgates reminded him of some distinguished family picture by his countryman Vandyck; a resemblance which the admixture of Spanish blood in the veins of two of its members, tended to establish.

Two years elapsed in this dignified species of exile. Harry was acquiring those accomplishments which a continental education seldom fails to bestow; while the good old lady seemed to lay down a faculty for every one of those displayed by her great grandson. Deprived of sight, she would sit by the fire in winter, in the sunshine in summer, listening

to Miss Woodgate's subdued voice, as she read some book of piety; or reciting for Harry's amusement some legendary history of the former grandeur of the Woodgates; when suddenly a great change was wrought in the family by the death of a distant relative, the godmother of Agnes, who bequeathed to her a fortune of ten thousand pounds. Miss Woodgate was now thirty, alienated from worldly pleasures, engrossed by the well-being of her family; and those who had so long disposed of her existence, now set about disposing of her property. Sir Richard congratulated himself that he had attained the means of carrying on a lawsuit he had long been anxious to commence; while Mrs. Woodgate announced that they must quit Ghent and pass a cheerful winter at Brussels in society more agreeable.

But, for the first time in her life, Agnes was firm. Miss Woodgate expressed in calm but decided terms, her resolution to expend two thirds of the income, thus unexpectedly accru-

ing to her, upon the education at Eton and Oxford of her nephew; leaving the remainder to accumulate for his further advancement in life. Seldom, however, has so disinterested a distribution of property been met with so much opposition. Sir Richard and his daughter-in-law seemed to fancy themselves as ill-used, as if Agnes had devoted her fortune to the maintenance of a lap-dog; and her sole encouragement in her noble intentions emanated from her venerable grandame, who whispered that the boy would live to reward her, by raising from the dust the fallen name of Woodgate.

Harry, meanwhile, who by the desire of aunt Agnes was kept in ignorance of the extent of his obligations, proceeded at once to Eton, and by his classical proficiency attained almost immediate distinction. Twice every year, he returned from England to his family, increased in stature and developed in intelligence; to listen to the now faltering adjura-

tions of the high born matron, to the tender admonitions of the gentle aunt, and the stirring lessons of the more quick-witted mother. [Old Lady Woodgate spoke of the world as an arena where honours were to be striven for, in order to support the ancient lustre of his decaying house ;—his mother, as a theatre, where the ablest actor becomes manager of the company ; dispensing the allotment of parts, and engaging the monopoly of benefits ; but Agnes, as a place where high station is the meed of high acquirements, and affords the means of conferring benefits upon mankind. The last lesson sank deepest ; for something of the generous nature of his unfortunate young father clung to the dispositions of Henry Woodgate. But by the time he attained to man's estate, the venerable matron was lying in the protestant cemetery of Ghent ; while the younger one had renounced the name of Woodgate and the weariness of her existence as holder of Sir

Richard's leading strings, to figure at the court, of Brussels as Countess van Pierrsen.

The disconsolate Baronet could scarcely forgive this desertion. To be left with none to storm at but his humble daughter, was a severe trial; more particularly when, on Henry's leaving college, Agnes fully supported the young man's determination to see something of the world before he made choice of a profession; and provided him with the means of visiting the various courts and countries of Europe.

Two years afterwards, as Harry was sledging away a hard winter with considerable éclat at Vienna, a letter from aunt Agnes apprized him that he was a Baronet, and herself alone in the world. She did not think it necessary to add, that the last illness of the late Sir Richard might be dated from the perusal of a letter from his kinsman Mr. Sullivan of Hawkurst Hall; in

which, among other items of Kentish news, he related that Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill Place, was pricked for the office of High Sheriff of the county.

## CHAPTER IV.

Rebellious hinds, the filth and scum of Kent,  
Mark'd for the gallows, lay your weapons down ;  
Home to your cottages !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE loss of Sir Richard was in every sense a gain to his surviving family. When the vain useless man, who had never stirred a finger for its benefit, was laid in the dust, it appeared that, on the sale of Stokeshill Place, old Dobbs of Westerton had persuaded him to insure his life, as some compensation to the grandson deprived of his patrimony ; and Sir Henry, in addition to his grandfather's small income of

six hundred a year, now found himself in possession of a sum of fifteen thousand pounds.

The explanations consequent upon these events, put him also in possession, in detail, of the munificent proceedings of his aunt. It became necessary for her support to resume the income of five hundred a year hitherto devoted to his use, of which he no longer stood in need ; and how could Sir Henry sufficiently admire and love the generosity which had kept from him the secret of his obligations ?—Agnes, whom his mother had represented to him as a yea-nay creature, respectable only in its harmlessness, proved to be a woman of the highest mind,—of the deepest feeling ;—who had devoted her youth to the solace of two superannuated relatives, and her fortune to promote the welfare of the only son of her only brother.

Eager to repay in deference and affection the obligations he had received from this ex-

cellent friend, he insisted on passing with her at Ghent the first three months after his accession to the title; to prevent the painful consciousness of loneliness we experience on the sudden cessation of even an irksome personal attendance. In spite of his grandfather's ungracious temper, Sir Henry felt convinced that Agnes would miss him; and as she expressed an intention of passing at Ghent the two remaining years of her lease, he chose to bear her company during the first winter. By this sacrifice, he obtained leisure for the digestion of his plans, and afforded an opportunity to aunt Agnes to reap the reward of her generosity, in surveying the development of his faculties and virtues. Vainly did the Countess van Pierrsen, now a leading *intrigante* of the court of Brussels, strive to entice him away by a brilliant description of the honours awaiting him at court; he chose to dedicate himself to the relative to whom he stood so largely indebted.

To the liberality of his education, Sir Henry attributed the endowments to the possession of which blindness was impossible. There was a struggling spirit within him which looked proudly forward, confident in its own resources. He was conscious of intense passions as well as lofty capacities,—but he felt himself master over both. Unwilling to rush hastily into the arena and snatch the first laurel-branch that presented itself, barren or fertile, he knew his hour must come. The loss of a few months mused away with the unworldly Agnes, could oppose no important detriment to his progress in life.

Such was the position of the young Baronet, when a letter arrived from his college friend Brereton's father, his own kinsman, Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst Hill, acquainting him of the vacancy likely to occur in the representation of Westerton.

“ You have but to show yourself here,” wrote the enemy of John Barnsley, “ to excite

a universal reaction in your favour; and I own it would gratify me to have for my coadjutor the representative of a family so long respected in the county of Kent."

Sir Henry submitted this startling question absolutely to the disposal of aunt Agnes. His compliance with Sullivan's invitation must produce immediate disappointment to herself; and he would willingly have renounced all, rather than cause one painful emotion to her affectionate heart. It was not, however, from any selfish consideration, that Agnes advised him to postpone his project of getting into parliament. She conceived that he had not yet formed ties of sufficient magnitude in England to afford the support indispensable to every man entering upon public life. Sir Henry had no family connexions to bespeak indulgence; and Agnes who, with all her adoration, was not blind to his defects, saw in him an abruptness of manner likely to give offence. Attributing this surliness to his early consciousness of the

inferiority of his fortunes to his social position, she fancied it would gradually disappear, now that he found himself in possession of a handsome competence.

But Mr. Sullivan was not to be discouraged by the courteous letters of refusal dispatched by Sir Henry. He wrote again. Lord Withamstead's peerage was not yet gazetted;—there was leisure for second thoughts; and trusting to the frailties of human nature to strengthen the influence of his arguments, the shrewd old gentleman suggested, that though under any circumstances it was Stokeshill that was to send its members to parliament, the question in the eye of the county was “New times or old?” — “Money or rank?” — “Barnsley or Woodgate?”

Agnes Woodgate could not resist such an appeal. By the remote rumours which had reached her from Stokeshill, she judged Barnsley to be a mean-minded man, a grinder of her poor, a chastiser of her sick. Care had been

taken to impress Sir Henry and herself with the enormity of his innovations ; his barbarism in making rough places plain, and crooked straight, among certain ruinous remains, consecrated by legends of the Hand and Flower. They thought of him as a *ci-devant* attorney, intent only on preventing the name of Woodgate from being had in remembrance in the land ; and scarcely had they come to the conclusion of Sullivan's letter, announcing that he was about to take his seat in the senate of the country, as “ Barnsley of Stokeshill,” than they rescinded their former objections ; and the next night saw Sir Henry Woodgate embark in the Ostend packet for England.

He was to proceed direct to Hawkhurst ; and it afforded him pleasure, on arriving there, to find that Sullivan Brereton was staying with his Neapolitan friend Lady Shoreham, at Wynnex Abbey. The day following his arrival, having ridden over to announce his intentions, he unwittingly intruded into the presence of

Margaret Barnsley, in the library; and soon afterwards came a second time in collision with her, at the dinner-party preceding the festival at the Abbey.

It may be observed, that in an electioneering contest,—as in other scratches,—ardour comes with anxiety, —and passion with pain. Sir Henry, who arrived in Kent with a very moderate spirit of antagonism against Barnsley, was soon pricked here and twitted there, into the utmost inveteracy. Nor was it a mere electioneering fever which inflamed his virulence. That visit to Stokeshill village had done wonders, by reviving effaced recollections, and calling up spirits from the vasty deep of the past. Long as he had reconciled himself to his forfeiture of the family estates, his impatience of Barnsley's occupancy of the home of his ancestors, was now as vehement as it was unreasonable. The intoxication of popularity is an excitement to which no young heart is inaccessible; and the shouts of the market-place

and toasts of the Hand and Flower, over-heated his imagination. On his first appearance in the county society, the deference due to one of the most ancient families in Kent, welcomed him back cordially to his place ; on his first appearance in his former feof, the infatuation connected with his name, welcomed him back to a place no longer his own ;—while the Mrs. Hawkinses of Stokeshill, and Timminses of Westerton, kissed the hem of his garments and the dust under his feet ; and old nurse Woods of Woodsend, fell upon his neck and wept aloud for thankfulness at his return.

At Naples, Rome, Vienna, Munich,—unconscious of all this sympathy,—Sir Henry had been content to know himself the last representative of a decayed family—reckless whence he came, or whither he was going,—content in the enjoyment of his youth, health and faculties. Kent was nothing to him *there*,—Stokeshill, nothing,—Barnsley, nothing ! The blue sky,—the fertile land,—antiquity, with its

treasures,—posterity, with its chimeras, dazzled his eyes with their enjoyments. The world was all before him where to choose; and he almost forgot that it contained a Stokeshill Place.

But he knew and recollected it now!—Not all the maps of Mogg, or charts of Arrowsmith, could show a spot to vie with its importance in his estimation: the very soul within him yearned after Stokeshill. That one parish, with its chivalrous associations with his family, seemed to contain his Palladium. Riveted by such a tie to the soil of England, he felt that he should become worthier to bear a part in the legislation of the land; that, *pro aris et focis*, he could fight a good fight. But, while “lord of his presence and no land beside,” what was he but a loose pebble rolling hither and thither with every ebb and flow of the tide of public life! He was about to become a London man,—a club man,—a homeless man; and the conclusion of his career would be to

creep like an insect into the discarded shell of some other crustaceous animal. He must hire some “genteel residence in a sporting county,” —some abominable *rus in urbe* at Fulham or Edmonton;—while John Barnsley the attorney remained sole lord and suzerain of deserted Stokeshill Place!

With such feelings, he repaired to Wynnex; with such feelings listened, day after day, to the solemn impertinences of Brereton, and slang inuendoes of the young Lord and his knowing uncles. The Drewes, who for twelve years past had been nursing and keeping warm their resentments against the supposed estrangers of their late brother’s confidence; Brereton, stung home by the notion that Barnsley was whispering about the neighbourhood the tale of his dismissal of Edward Sullivan; conspired to stimulate Sir Henry into so thorough a contempt of the Barnsley family, that he had some difficulty in maintaining a decent civility towards either father or daughter, when he en-

countered them under the roof of Lady Shoreham.

The election added fuel to the flames. When the “No Barnsley!”—“No pettifoggers!”—“No nobodies!” chalked up from the north toll bar of Westerton to the south, by the emissaries of Dobbs and Snobbs, were met by the emissaries of Harpenden and Hill with “No Woodgates!”—“No skulkers!”—“No pauper Baronets!”—his wrath rose, as though Barnsley himself were the aggressor. The mud-flinging wit of an English election was new to his ears polite; he knew not that being called names was an essential preparative to being called to the House;—and when told to his face by Mr. Tallow-Chandler Wright, or rather when hearing told *across* his face to the free and independent electors of Westerton, that his great-grandfather was an out-at-elbows,—his grandfather a jail-bird,—his father a nonentity,—his mother a frog-eating Papist, he forgot that “all was fair at an election.” He

was in a furious rage, and all his rage was directed against Barnsley.

But if Sir Henry's wrath waxed hot within him, even when able to dispatch a few lines bidding the anxious Agnes "be of good cheer, —that he was sure of his election;" —what was it when compelled to retract his words, and own himself a vanquished man,—a man vanquished by the attorney! It was not till the following morning, however, that he awoke to the full consciousness of his disappointment, —his mortification, the mortification of all Stokeshill, — the disappointment of aunt Agnes!

It was in the midst of this disagreeable contemplation of the uncertainty of all sublunary things, that he was roused by vague rumours of a "lark" projected by the Parson and Gus to mar the effect of the chairing of the successful candidate. So far as regarded a mere vulgar, electioneering, practical joke, he had now begun to understand that "all was fair." But

when Helen Sullivan, with her usual frank decision of manner, told him that his own repute was likely to be compromised by the daring lawlessness of the two knowing gentlemen who had undertaken to head the faction in his name, Woodgate felt that he must come forward promptly in his own defence. He mounted his horse,—he rode off to Westerton. However contrary to custom such a proceeding, he resolved to be on the spot in person for the defence of his pitiful adversary.

Sir Henry was just in time!—The Parson had been overtly and Gus surreptitiously at work, reviving old enthusiasms in their favour among the raggamuffins of the town;—scamps who had baited badgers with them thirty years before, and broke fences with them, twenty;—and who had been admiring the recital of their coaching and smoking exploits,—their renown in the ring,—their standing on the turf, and in the Sunday newspapers, for the last ten. The influence of the house of Drewe, dormant

during the fogrum reign of the late Lord, and the long minority of the present, seemed suddenly revived at Westerton ; and the populace prepared themselves to fling their caps into the air, and anything in nature into the face of “ ‘torney Barnsley,” at the suggestion of Gus and his brothers.

A faction is easily organized. The very stones of Westerton seemed ready to array themselves against Barnsley, by whom they had been so long kept in a state of subordination. Scarcely, in short, had the new member issued in his curule chair from the Old Angel, than a hooting and hissing mob of beings derived apparently from the Angel’s antipodes, seemed to surround him. To hootings succeeded peltings ;—hootings which put him in fear of his life, and peltings in peril ;—till at length one of his cheeks, laid open by some missile, was streaming with blood,—and the constables, though reinforced by a swearing-in

which had kept old Closeman half the morning at work, were beginning to give way, when the roarings and bellowings of the crowd of—"No Barnsley!"—"Down with the Attorney!"—were suddenly converted from a minor key of five flats, to a major key of six sharps; and bland acclamations of "Woodgate for ever!" resounded in the air. Sir Henry rode up to the field of action, just as Barnsley was knocked senseless out of the chair!

It was Woodgate's own proposal to Barnsley, (after having seated him safely under the hands of Mr. Squill in the Old Angel parlour, for his wounds to be dressed and his wrongs redressed) to accompany him in his carriage for protection, as far as Stokeshill Place!—Such a proposal inflicted a pang on him who received, scarcely less than upon him who gave it utterance. Sir Henry had, in fact, no means of appreciating the extent of the "ungrateful injury" perpetrated against Barnsley. The mob was to

*him* a mob,—a sea of faces, resembling those of any other assemblage of Toms, Dicks and Bobs. But to Barnsley every face of that reviling multitude had a physiognomy of its own. *This* blackguard he had saved from the treadmill,—*that* from the pillory; yet they now recollected only the sourness of the bread and water, and bitterness of the durance vile, for which their severer sentence had been commuted.—The wife of one Tom was receiving double allowance from the parish at his suggestion; another Dick's son had been apprenticed to a chimney sweeper by his humanity, when he might have been whipped for stealing;—while Bob,—or rather, how many Bobs of that perverse generation,—had been paid twelvepence a day by him, for many hundreds of days, for breaking stones on the King's highway:—and now all they wanted was to break his head!

Be a magistrate!—toil for the good of your parish—of your county;—enlarge your work-houses,—people your penitentiaries,—make

heavy your tolls, and light your judgments on the bench;—but do not expect to be rewarded with the gratitude of the multitude at a contested election.

## CHAPTER V.

I've sigh'd my English breath in foreign climes,  
Eating the bitter bread of banishment,  
While you have fed upon my signories,  
Dispark'd my parks, and fell'd my forest wood;  
From my own windows torn my household coat,  
Raz'd out my impress, leaving me no sign,  
Save men's opinions and my living blood,  
To show the world I am a gentleman.

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE occurs now and then a crisis in human life capable of evoking a sixth sense, such as the one said by the initiated in animal magne-

tism to be called into action by somnambulism. The first ten minutes at sea, the last ten previously to a severe operation, appear to develop instincts previously dormant; and to a criminal proceeding to execution this susceptibility may possibly afford an unsuspected source of anguish.

John Barnsley and Sir Henry Woodgate, as they proceeded together in the chariot of the former from the Old Angel to Stokeshill Place, were certainly conscious of a thousand struggling emotions hitherto unnoticed in their bosoms. The pride of Sir Henry prompted him to offer the protection of his companionship to the wounded man; the pride of Barnsley determined him to accept the offer. For Barnsley did not choose Sir Henry to suppose him afraid of witnessing the extent of his influence. He resolved to show his indifference to the intemperate partizanship of the populace. Firm in the consciousness of his value, strong as a penal statute in his own equity,

he prepared to go forth and face the blatant beast of popular ingratitude, with a vigour of magnanimous disdain worthy of Arthur the Duke.

But though scorning to appear humiliated by the protection afforded by the presence of Woodgate, while Sir Henry bowed from the carriage window to the rolling billows of an ocean of heads in the Market Place, and shook his uplifted hand as a token to them to repress the vehemence of their demonstrations; though he even strove to get up a conversation on indifferent subjects when, having left the town behind them, the carriage took the road to Stokeshill,—the thing was impossible. A thousand flurrying thoughts crowded into Barnsley's mind, at that moment, to which he had not leisure to afford a just analysis. His wounds were smarting,—his head and heart were aching,—a new sense of his situation seemed to beset him. He did not feel altogether the master of his own property. A superior

was seated by his side. The Woodgates were, once more, all in all. This world seemed made for Cæsar !

But if such were the gathering emotions of the callous man of business, what may not be inferred of those of the impassioned and high-minded Sir Henry Woodgate ; when, having wound among the hedges, on the sprays of which the robin was striking up his admonitory autumnal song, they passed the old lodge gates, through which he had so often cantered of yore on his favourite pony, while the venerable old servant who held the gate stood uncovered with his long white hair gently uplifted by the breeze, as the heir rode by !— Away they rolled along the now smooth road ; crossed the bridge of which the parapet, *then* ruinous, was now newly and firmly cemented ; and came in sight of Stokeshill Place. The old stone manor-house, its sober tint brightened by the setting sun that sparkled on its windows and cast a golden gleam across its

portal, stood out in singular contrast with the tower of Stokeshill church, over-grown by the Virginian creeper which, crimsoned by autumnal frosts, seemed converted into a column of fire. Between the abode of the living and the abode of the dead, there intervened only a few ancient trees that looked like the gigantic guardians of the Place ; while Margaret's flower-beds of dahlias and winter roses, brightened the scene with that spirit of feminine elegance, the last to linger on a spot, the first to embellish. But for that slight indication of a woman's presence, Sir Henry could have found it in his heart to lift up his voice and curse the place and its inmates !—

The moment, it must be owned, was a trying one. *There* stood the abode in which his father and his father's ancestors, had seen the light. *There* the church under whose hallowed shelter their ashes were reposing. Even on his mother's side the name of the gallant d'Esterre combined to consecrate the

place his own. Whatever station he held in the eyes of men, was derived from Stokeshill. History defined his forefathers as the Wood-gates of Stokeshill. The earth bore witness of them,—the air was instinct with their breath;—there they had lived,—there they had died!—There had their households assembled to welcome home their bride;—there had their firstborn smiled upon them;—there had their grey heads been honoured,—there their death-bed soothed by the tenderness of their kindred and the prayers of the poor.—There had they pledged their wine-cup, in the hour of conviviality,—there drained their chalice of tears in the day of adversity.

What trace remained of them now?—a few hollow sepulchres, and the tattered banners drooping over their ashes!—

Had Sir Henry been alone, he would perhaps have gnashed his teeth for bitterness and beat his throbbing brows. But with the man—the enemy—the attorney—by his side, he

laboured to subdue his feelings to more dignified calmness. A cold thrill ran through his frame, like the shivering that precedes high fever, as, with a forced smile, he observed on the fine autumn they were enjoying, and the good fortune of the hop growers. There was foam upon his lip as he smiled ; there was loathing in his voice as he made this insignificant remark. But Barnsley saw and heard only an attempt at courtesy, and replied with an obsequious alacrity worthy of his vulgar nature.

“ You will do me the favour to alight, and give my daughter an opportunity of thanking you for the service you have done me ? ”—said he, as they drew nearer to the house ; and something of an irrepressible desire to look once more upon long lost objects, instigated Sir Henry to bow in the affirmative, and relapse into mournful silence. He had not been at the trouble to inquire much into Barnsley’s domestic history. He remembered

a pleasing looking girl at Wynnex Abbey who was said to be his daughter. He remembered having noticed, opposite to his own family monuments in Stokeshill church, a plain white marble tablet “Sacred to the memory of Mary, the wife of J. Barnsley Esq. æt. 20.” with the device of a lily broken on its stem, above the inscription ;—in which simple record there was something vaguely touching, which for a moment palliated his animosity. But it was neither of Mary nor of Margaret he was thinking now. Sir Henry was desirous only to impress on the mind of the attorney of Stokeshill, the triumphant member for Westerton, that there was no trial he could inflict, capable of daunting or humiliating the spirit of a Woodgate !

Sir Henry was too much engrossed by his own feelings to notice the horror-struck air of the servant who came to the door to receive them, at the aspect of his master, (from whose forehead, the wound having been but hastily

attended to, the blood had trickled and dried upon his cheek) or the frivolous apologies of Barnsley that, his establishment being dispersed at Westerton, he could not receive his guest with becoming honours; as if Sir Henry had leisure to think, at such a moment, of footmen or butlers, man servants or maid servants.

“ My dear Margaret !” cried Barnsley throwing open the door of his daughter’s sitting room, “ I have brought you a gentleman to whom you must offer your thanks for having been instrumental in rescuing your father from considerable danger.”

Startled by this strange appeal, Margaret half rose from her couch to fix her wondering eyes upon her father and Sir Henry Woodgate; but only to sink down again overcome with emotion. Pale from recent illness, her cheek became blanched to deadlier paleness by the sight of her father’s disfigurement. He was wounded!—He spoke of having been

in danger!—Instead of welcoming Sir Henry Woodgate, she burst into tears.

“ My dear girl,” said Barnsley, in a tone of compassionating superiority, “ There is really no occasion for all this agitation. I am quite safe you see,—quite well,—this wound is a mere scratch. What will Sir Henry Woodgate think of you, my dear, if you distress yourself in this way about such a trifle?”—

Margaret cared, just then, very little what Sir Henry thought of her; and it happened that Sir Henry thought of her not at all. Having retired to the window to avoid being a restraint on the meeting between the father and daughter, he was bringing to his remembrance that the room he stood in had been that of aunt Agnes; that it was there in his childhood, almost in his babyhood, he had visited her to be loved and caressed every morning. He could have even pointed out the spot on the wall where hung her deceased

brother's picture, which she was in the habit of showing him as " Poor papa ;" and the corner of the chimney piece to which she was accustomed to lift her nephew that he might take off, with his own little hand, a marble greyhound, his favourite plaything.—And now young Agnes was a grave woman with silver hairs among her dark tresses,—an exile in a foreign land ;— and little Harry a strong man, and a stranger within his father's gates !

His soul was full, even to bursting ; nor was his anguish lessened by the necessity of subjecting it to control. He began to feel that he had no business there ; that having re-conducted home the member, it was his business to depart ; and turning towards the sofa, he saw Margaret, her mild eyes still wet with tears, sitting beside her father, his hand pressed in hers. There was no affectation,—no exaggeration in her sorrow. Her father had nearly fallen a victim to ingratitude and ill-usage ; it was but natural she should weep. But when Sir Henry Woodgate turned sternly

towards them to take leave, Margaret made a strong attempt to recover her composure; for she felt that there was too little in common between them, to admit of shedding tears in his presence.

“ I must beg you, Sir Henry, to make due allowance for this young lady’s weakness,” said her father, assuming as nearly as he could the jocular tone of his friend Closeman. “ My daughter is scarcely yet recovered from a dangerous fever, with which, as you may have heard, she was attacked at Wynnex Abbey; any fresh shock easily overpowers her nerves.”

“ I have the more reason to apologize to Miss Barnsley for my intrusion,” observed Woodgate, involuntarily bending a favourable eye upon the frail and delicate beauty of the invalid. “ I am sorry,” he continued, addressing Margaret, “ that I shall be unable to convey to your friend, Miss Sullivan, a more flattering account of your recovery.” For, at that moment, as he fixed his eyes on the

gently expressive countenance of the invalid, all that Helen Sullivan had said in her favour, when reproaching him with want of gallantry towards Margaret at the memorable Wynnex dinner-scene, recurred to his memory.

“ Is not Helen gone into Norfolk,”—demanded Margaret, in a tone fluttered by the apprehension that her father might ascribe the inquiry to some latent feeling of interest about Edward.

“ We all go to-morrow,” he replied, attributing Miss Barnsley’s emotion to surprise at his indiscretion in referring to anything connected with Hawkurst in her father’s presence.

“ You are acquainted, then, with the Duke of Grantville?”—inquired Barnsley.

“ Connected. My grandfather was a cousin of the Brereton family.”

“ True—very true,—I had forgotten. I am a very bad hand at recollecting family connexions. I never could manage to knock a pedigree into my head,” said Barnsley, jocosely.

Sir Henry could not help feeling that pedi-

gree was the last topic likely to interest a Mr. Barnsley.

“ Fortunately,” said he, with a bitter smile, “ it is one of those trifling subjects on which people are kind enough to spare one’s memory. In these speculating times, the booksellers are at the trouble of printing half-a-dozen catalogues of one’s aunts and cousins.”

Barnsley, hugging himself in the certainty that no one would be at the trouble of printing for *him* a list likely to produce such unsatisfactory associations, recurred to the Duke of Grantville.

“ Very fine preserves, I am told, at Buckhurst Lodge?—said to be the best partridge shooting in England?”

“ I fancy so. I am not much of a sportsman,” replied Sir Henry, making a move with his hat, as if about to bid them good morning. “ There can be no occasion for my taking out your carriage again,” he continued, perceiving Barnsley’s hand on the bell. “ Though not a

sportsman, I am an excellent walker; and I should prefer making at once across the country for Hawkhurst, without returning through Westerton."

"But, my dear Sir, there can be no difficulty about the carriage. The cross-road between Hawkhurst and my place is by no means so very bad. My coachman knows the holes about Lee Common, and will keep clear of them. I assure you, you have nothing to apprehend."

"I was not acquainted with the holes at Lee Common," said Woodgate, trying to muster a grim smile; "but I *prefer* walking. I shall be at Hawkhurst in half an hour."

"Not under three quarters, even if you knew the way; and there are two turnings before you come to Lee Bridge, which you will find puzzling. Bless my soul! it is already half-past six. The Sullivans will have dined before you arrive. If I might presume, Sir

Henry, to take the liberty, I should venture to request the honour——”

Woodgate hastily interrupted him. Much as he had borne that day, he was determined not to submit to the degradation of being asked to dinner by Barnsley.

“ I am obliged to you, Sir,” said he, stiffly ; “ I dined early——”

“ I am afraid you think it will be an inconvenience to us. You are mistaken, I assure you. No difference shall be made, if you are kind enough to take us in the rough.”

“ I am no epicure,” said Sir Henry, looking nettled. “ I am as little capable of shunning a bad dinner as of eating two in a day.”

“ I have deputed my friend Closeman to represent me at the dinner down yonder,” observed Barnsley, waxing familiar on so familiar a subject as dinner. “ After all that has passed, I thought I had enough for the present of my

constituents. They have taught me a lesson I shall remember the longest day I have to live. I begin to envy you, Sir Henry, having got your neck out of the noose. I really congratulate you."

" You can scarcely congratulate me, Sir, on the loss of that which, four and twenty hours ago, we both thought worthy of contention," said Woodgate, more and more haughtily. " But it is late. Allow me to take my leave."

He turned with a profound bow towards Miss Barnsley, who made a strong but useless effort to rise; and blushed as she muttered an incoherent farewell.

" I am exceedingly mortified, Sir Henry, that I cannot persuade you to take the carriage," resumed her father, officiously opening the door for his guest.—" Good morning. I fear I cut a sorry figure," he continued, fancying the scornful eye of Sir Henry was fixed upon his bandages. " Not exactly in a state for

bumper toasts,—eh, Sir Henry?—I may wish myself joy that my convivial duties will fall to the share of my jovial friend Closeman of Cinnamon Hall.”

## CHAPTER VI.

Like oaks on some cold mountain's brows  
At every wound they sprout and grow ;  
The axe and sword new vigour give,  
And by their ruins they revive.

HORACE.

TWENTY times in the course of that evening and the following day, did Margaret recall and reconsider every syllable uttered by Sir Henry Woodgate and her father, during that memorable visit ! To every word spoken by the former, she reverted with regret ;—to every word spoken by her father, with mortification. Sir Henry had been at no pains to disguise his

antipathy to the family. Perhaps it would not be natural for him to *like* them ;—but she could not bear that he should *despise* her father.

Never had Mr. Barnsley appeared to less advantage than under the excitement of recent outrage and present vexation. He was moreover in a state of physical suffering from the attack he had undergone. Very early in the evening, he felt ill enough to retire to bed ; nor was the violence of his head-ache much abated when, next morning, he had the satisfaction of perusing the following statement in the Kentish Chronicle—

Westerton.—Wednesday 23rd.—We have to record, with regret, a most disgraceful outrage which occurred yesterday in our ancient borough hitherto remarkable for urbanity, good order, and decorum. Certain of our townspeople, indignant at the infamous corruption openly practised during the recent contest, and eager to rebut the ignominy which the proceed-

ings of two individuals of the names of Harpenden and Hill have brought upon the borough of Westerton, assembled at an early hour in the vicinity of the pothouse from which it was supposed our new member would issue for his chairing, armed with sticks and stones, and evidently with hostile intentions. Under such circumstances, it would have been perhaps more to the credit of this gentleman's good feeling, had he spared us the disgraceful scene that followed, by sacrificing his own share of the vanities of the ceremony. But Mr. Barnsley, it seems, clung to the exhibition of the day; and, though manifestly suffering under considerable depression of spirits and with his face overspread by an unnatural palleness, about four o'clock, after much delay and disappointment, preceded by the extra number of special constables sworn in for his protection, the doughty member made his appearance. A scene ensued that beggars description! Cries of "No Barnsley!" rent the skies—"Down

with all nigger-drivers."—"Where's Bill Sandys?"—(an unfortunate youth now undergoing seven years' transportation for poaching in the Wynnex preserves, convicted on the evidence of Mr. Barnsley).—Dead cats,—dogs,—offal,—and other missiles of the most revolting description, were hurled in the face of the unpopular member. Very early in the affray, a constable in the discharge of his duty, received a blow on the temple with a bludgeon, and was carried off senseless to the infirmary. Two other men, ringleaders of the mob, fell stunned and bathed in blood. Our respected Mayor, with Jeremiah Closeman Esq. of Cinnamon Lodge, a county magistrate, having arrived on the spot, the riot act was about to be read; when, fortunately, the timely appearance of Sir Henry Woodgate, Bart. (the defeated member,) gave a new turn to the excitement of the multitude; and, leaning on his arm, the unfortunate Mr. Barnsley, after experiencing several severe contusions, was supported into the Angel.

Surgical advice was called in. It was pronounced, on examination of his wounds by an eminent practitioner of the town, (Osman Squills Esq.) that the unfortunate gentleman might be removed without danger to his mansion at Stokeshill Place ; and exactly twenty-seven minutes before six o'clock, the honourable member and his recent opponent entered together the chaise of the former gentleman, and drove the back way out of the Angel yard, amid the acclamations of such of the mob as had not yet quitted the spot. We lament, however, to state, that in the course of the evening, after the departure of Mr. Closeman to his seat at Cinnamon Lodge, and the dispersion of the constables, the populace re-assembled in the market-place ; and having torn up the hustings before the aid of the proper authorities could be procured, made a large bonfire in the centre of the market-place, over which was suspended on a pole an effigy personifying the unfortunate Mr. Barnsley.

The cheers and shouts of “Woodgate for ever!” with which these outrages were accompanied, sufficiently indicate the spirit producing such unusual excitement in the tranquil town of Westerton. Had not the owners of the two great factories, Whisthin, the carpet-weaver of North Lane, and Thurlow, proprietor of the cotton mills at King’s Bank, rung in their workmen an hour earlier than usual, (both of these gentlemen being strongly in the Barnsley interest,) it is impossible to guess what might have been the next movement of the rioters. We regret to record that, at one time, the market sheds and benches, piled up at one extremity of the market-place, were in great danger of falling a prey to the flames.

It is but justice, however, to the inhabitants of Westerton to add, that a considerable portion of these violent proceedings, may be traced to their disappointment of a ludicrous pageant which had been announced, by general report, as to precede the chairing of the mem-

ber; under the auspices of two honourable gentlemen, who are supposed to have grounds of family enmity against him. This indecent, but diverting scene, was prevented at the suggestion of the leading gentlemen of the Hawkhurst Committee; but it might have been wiser to gratify the frolics of the people by a piece of harmless pleasantry, than to have provoked the alarming (and it may prove in the sequel fatal) outrages, that disturbed the harmony of the day.

#### ADDITIONAL PARTICULARS.

*(From our own Correspondent.)*

We learn, (from a confidential source), that after quitting the Angel Inn, the two gentlemen whose contest has excited such an unprecedented ferment in the county, proceeded straight to Stokeshill Place, for a private conference; where, after considerable

discussion in the presence of lawyers employed on either side, Sir Henry Woodgate consented to withdraw his notice of a petition, upon Mr. Barnsley pledging himself to retire from the borough in the event of a dissolution.— This is handsome on both sides; and under such auguries, we trust that a more liberal feeling will be displayed towards the unfortunate member, during his temporary representation of the borough of Westerton.”

And it was to obtain such satisfaction as this, that Barnsley had expended upwards of five thousand pounds,— and received a blow on the cheek bone producing exfoliation of the jaw! After all that had been said, sworn, written, and vociferated against him,—after all the littlenesses, the more treasonable for their truth, which had been brought forward;—the cracks and flaws of pedigree exposed,—the peculiarities of manner ridiculed,—the peculiarities of dress caricatured,—the suf-

fering attorney felt as sore within his skin, as though he had passed a month upon the red hot bed of Guatimozin!—

To such griefs, Margaret had no consolation to afford. She listened patiently while her father recited as circumstantial a narrative of his afflictions as he thought it desirable she should be acquainted with;—but there was no argument by which she could hope to pacify his resentment. It was undeniable that, for twenty years, he had been devoting himself to the service of his fellow-countymen, without earning a jot of their affection in return. Where was the fault?—In her father or in mankind?—It was not for her to consider too curiously!—He was uneasy,—he was unwell;—she could only sit by his side,—prompt in affirmation and commiseration, whenever he seemed to ask for them. She had never seen her father so desponding before; and old Mrs. Molyneux went shaking her head with repressed satisfaction and pretended sympathy,

into the servant's hall, hinting that " poor gentleman, Mr. Barnsley seemed quite overset in his mind by being made member of parliament."

Certain it was, that though little remained of his wounds besides a strip of court-plaster, he appeared to be completely unhinged. Parliament indeed was prorogued till after the holidays ; the neighbourhood was broken up,—Hawkhurst empty ;—the Abbey empty ;—as if all Kent had made up its mind to pass its Christmas elsewhere. There was nothing to amuse—nothing to occupy poor Barnsley. No Edward Sullivan to drop in to a family dinner, and endure his squirearchical potter through the evening ;—no Wynnex executorship supplying farmers to be dunned,—out-buildings to be repaired,—trespasses to be prosecuted,—bailiffs to be bullied. After the sneering hesitation evinced by Lord Shoreham about signing the release, Barnsley scorned to show the most acuminated tip of his nose on

his Lordship's premises. He would have discovered a poacher wiring hares in the Wynnex preserves, or an old woman pulling faggots out of the hedges, and not given information against them. He would have held his peace, let whoever would prove inclined to break it against the Drewes !

Still less was Barnsley disposed to fill up his idle moments by visits to Westerton, or exertions in the village of Stokeshill. Town and country had done their worst against him, and he chose to show them he remembered it. Having gained nothing else by his election, it was hard if he might not make the most of his resentment.

Every day he sat with his daughter and her governess after dinner, with his plate full of empty walnut shells, and his head full of vague reminiscences ; while Miss Winston revolved in her mind whether he intended to bestow his usual Christmas dole of blankets and coals upon the poor, and Margaret whether

the wreck of matter or the crush of worlds would suffice to rouse him from his present apathy. She could have felt it in her heart to wish his favourite mare might fall lame, the rot make its appearance in his pet flock of South Downs, or the dry rot in his rafters, so he would but once more break forth into the warmth of his former vivacity. But alas ! there was no speculation in those eyes which he bent upon the marble chimney-piece, as if endowed with the faculty which is said to see into a millstone ; when one day, at dessert, John appeared with a letter in his hand, and the customary lacquey laconism of “ Waits for an answer.”

Margaret's eyes naturally fell upon her father's face, while he perused the epistle ; —probably some formal invitation. But the moment she saw a flush overspread his now sallow face, and a gleam of enthusiasm light up his now lack-lustre eyes, she knew that it was a letter of business ! There was a tone

of returning glee in his voice, as he desired John to bid the man wait and place lights in the library, that he might write an answer. Yet the epistle was only a despatch from Messrs. Harpenden and Hill ; and even Barnsley, though roused up at the summons as the lion sniffing a prey afar off, saw in its contents only the promise of a job, a negociation, a shred of parchment ; little surmising that in that letter, brief and insignificant as it was, existed the fiat of his future destinies, and those of his whole family !—

The intelligence contained in the epistle of the Westerton lawyers, simply regarded the real estate of their late lamented client Jeremiah Dodwell, D.D.—F.L.S—and F.S.A. Rector of Wynnex ; the tidings of whose demise had been announced to an afflicted county by the Kentish Chronicle, in the same paper which circulated the first day's polling at the Westerton election. The lynx-eyed housekeeper was, according to previous expectation, both

executrix and residuary legatee ; but the old doctor had commanded the sale of his estates, for the purpose of division between his illiterate associate and certain learned societies. Among the property thus to be disposed of, happened to be a certain farm, once included within the ring-fence of Stokeshill, and purchased off from under some execution served upon old Sir Ralph Woodgate, for a sum of four thousand pounds.

Now Maplehurst, the farm in question, was attached to the vast continent of the manor of Hawkhurst by an isthmus, consisting of a copse and turnip field ; and this desirable acquisition was accordingly offered for sale by private contract to Squire Barnsley, at the suggestion of the housekeeper, and per acquiescence of their common solicitor. Parson Drewe, who was already promoted to the rectory of Wynnex, had already so far contrived to affront the thrifty lady by hints of dilapidation money, and other acts of rapine on the pre-

mises, that instead of setting about considering with whom, among the country gentlemen of the neighbourhood, she was at liberty to make the best bargain for Maplehurst, she considered only which among them was likeliest to prove a rumbustious neighbour to the Parson ; and pitched upon Barnsley, as having injuries of his own to avenge, which would secure retribution for her own.

Mr. Barnsley's ready answer to this proposition, contained instructions to Messrs. Harpinden and Hill to offer to the disconsolate semi-widow, the sum of five thousand pounds for the property. It was not necessary to pause, ponder, or survey ; Barnsley knew the number of acres, rods, poles or perches, and the precise value of every square inch of ground in the parish. It was a mere matter of arithmetic. A sum in the rule of three set him down Maplehurst at the value of £5,342 9s 6d, and five thousand was consequently a handsome offer. Having added a postscript,

to the purport that he should wait upon Messrs. Harpenden and Hill to treat further on the matter, the following day at one, he signed, sealed and delivered his letter, and found the ladies in the drawing-room. Scarcely had he seated himself between the tea table and a roaring fire, when Margaret saw that all was right,—that her father was himself again!—His eyes sparkled,—a vivid flush had already dispersed the slow-coursing blood from his sallow cheeks. There was even a degree of elasticity in the movement with which he crossed his legs, wholly at variance with his apathy of the preceding evening.

Margaret knew better than to notice even the slightest of these changes; or to question her father concerning his motive for repairing after tea to the library, to examine, candle in hand, a magnificent map of the county, suspended therein. It was not that the map could show him so much as a bramble-bush or dock-root of which he knew not. The wood,

the brook, the ponds, delineated on the map, were written also in the tablet of his brain. All he wanted to determine, by renewed observation, was the exact amount of its eligibility as a purchase to Mr. Sullivan ;—and on perceiving that its position relative to Hawkhurst quadrupled the advantages it bore as an addition to his own estate, he felt that he had not offered a guinea too much. Old Sullivan would be furious at having such a prize carried off from under his disdainful nose !

On the following day, therefore, Mr. Barnsley waited upon H. and H., for the ultimatum of their client ; when, to his consternation, his offers were explicitly rejected. On the spot, and without further reference to the map, he increased them by the three hundred and fifty pounds which he regarded as the legitimate value of the property ; and was as readily answered that Dr. Dodwell had refused six thousand pounds for Maplehurst, from Farmer Hawkins

of Longlands, only the preceding year! He now thought it desirable to pause; and after requesting the solicitors to transmit his proposals to the lady, whose views might be less rapacious than those of her deceased master, quitted them to proceed to the banking-house of his friend Closeman; where, after two hours' delay and preparation, he signed a power of attorney enabling him to sell out as much stock as would produce a sum of seven thousand pounds sterling, from that laudable and constitutional stock, the five per cents, since most nefariously paid off by the illiberality of government.

“ Why, what the deuce!—is my friend Miss Margery going to be mittimusSED?—”demanded Closeman, as he received his constituent’s commission. “ Not election scores, I know;—faith, they must be pretty well cleared off by this time. What can you want with seven thousand pounds, except to marry your daughter?”

“ To marry myself, perhaps,” answered Barnsley, jocosely, not choosing to declare the the truth.

“ Ay, ay!—a dower for a wi-dower, eh? and may be for a dow-ager, eh?—they were up to snuff in saying you wanted to buckle to with the Viscountess?—eh?—”

“ With the Viscountess!—Did they say so?”—inquired Barnsley, in amazement.

“ Why not exactly that. But at the election, one of the placards swore that you had made up to her and got goose. But I fancy you got nothing at Wynnex Abbey but gosling? eh? No want of gosling there, I’ll take my davy;—never beheld such a jackanapes as that lad, since I handled the coin of the realm!”

“ There is no *harm* in Lord Shoreham,” replied Barnsley, entering into the question with reluctance.—“ The young man has been injudiciously brought up, and is misled by bad advisers.”

“ Those uncles?—ay, ay!—Enough to cor-

rupt a conventicle!—I wouldn't trust that sly and dry 'un with my purse and half-a-crown in't!—And as to the knowing blade they call the Parson (to whom the Viscount has given old Dodwell's living) it would not surprise me to hear he had set the marble figures on his ancestors' monuments, a-dancing like madmen over their graves!"

"More likely that he would provide a troop of opera-dancers to take their places!" said Barnsley.—"Ah! my dear Closeman, these are strange times for the bringing up of ingenuous youth;—it strikes me that a lad leaving a public school now-a-days, is a match for the devil;—far more likely to take in than be taken. I heard young Shoreham boasting to his uncle Gus, of having done Baron Nebuchadnezzar Salfiore at the Red House, about some pigeon match or other which——"

"Baron Nebuchadnezzar Salfiore!—Who the deuce is that?—One of the Rigdom Funidos family?"

"Salfiore is the first Baron of Jewry, just as

the Montmorencys are premier Barons of Christendom. The great Jews of the Stock-Exchange are all titled, you know, by some king or emperor, and infidels as they are, appear at court with half-a-dozen crosses on their breasts."

" Actually make the sign of the cross, eh?—The Archbishop of Canterbury should have an eye to 'em,—that's an eye which would be worth a Jew's eye!" said Closeman, laughing. " But, my fine fellow, this crusade of yours against wise men of the East don't lead me out of sight of the seven thousand pounds, eh?"

" Let them be ready by to-morrow night,"—replied Barnsley, more gravely, " and you shall know the why and the wherefore hereafter.

On the following night, however, instead of having to write out a cheque in favour of Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, on account of his purchase, Barnsley had to advance upon his offers so far as six thousand pounds; and again to be rejected. " Mrs. Rumbell was firm—she

knew the value of property ;—she could not afford to give it away.”

Barnsley was now growing uneasy. He did not choose to be robbed ; but could not make up his mind to throw what poor old Dodwell would have called, “ such a titbit” into the hands of Sullivan. Messrs. Harpenden and Hill kept a watchful eye upon his eagerness. They did not *advise* him to increase his offers ; but kept hinting that he would never forgive himself the loss of such an opportunity, if he suffered it to slip through his fingers.

To Margaret’s great delight, accordingly, her father became completely convalescent. He had now an object for every day’s existence ; a bit of business to write notes about ; to ride to Westerton about ; and (to borrow an expression from Billy Pitt) *to send messages about in italics*. Every morning he rode, field by field, over Maplehurst farm ; every evening, he had to communicate the result of his observations to Messrs. Harpenden and Hill. Already

he had given the people at Maplehurst reason to understand that he was about to become lord of the manor,—that they were to be his Helots. Already he secretly rejoiced in this new prospect of power; both as an accession of personal importance, and as a means of inflicting provocation upon Sullivan.

It was provoking to himself, however, to be obliged to enlarge, day after day, the scale of his negotiations. Mrs. Rumbell, or her sly legal investigators, fixed the price of Maplehurst at seven thousand pounds; and Barnsley was beginning to fear they would not abate a guinea of their pretensions. Messrs. Harpenden and Hill received his pedling advances with an air of civil superiority, such as one man assumes towards another the moment he becomes acquainted with his foible. They saw that Barnsley's vindictive enmity against Sullivan would lead him by the nose to any excess of absurdity; and profited by his weakness.—The careless indifference with which they re-

ceived his increased biddings, impressed upon his mind not only the inadequacy of his intentions, but the contempt entertained by the arbitrators of the business for his narrow parsimony. And thus Barnsley, at other times as proud of his prudence as some men of their prodigality,—who placed his pride in driving a hard bargain, rather than in bargaining like a gentleman,—now, subjugated for the first time by his passions, bid on like a spendthrift, with his two Judases of attorneys laughing him gravely in the face !

At length, on the eighth day of negociation, he sallied forth with his eyes sparkling, his coat well-buttoned, his riding-stick knowingly jerked, and his very mare pricking up her ears and distending her nostrils, as if even *she* had smelt out, as she turned her head towards Maplehurst, that Othello's occupation was come again, and that there was business in the wind. Her master meanwhile turned *his* towards the office at Westerton, where he trusted

Messrs. Harpenden and Hill were clenching his final offer of £6850.

The affair seemed fast upon its close; and as Barnsley attained the confines of the little estate, (even that grip of land which united it with Hawkhurst, and which at that present riding presented to his view a magnificent field of Swedes) he felt as if every hedge-stake on which he gazed were his own; and half rose in his stirrups to have a better view of the green ocean of his turnip-tops glittering with morning dew.

It was but a step further to the gate leading across the farm. But in attempting to open the latch with his hooked stick, an accomplishment which long practice places at the fingers' ends of every country-gentleman, the gate was refractory. It was in vain he poked and pulled; there was nothing for it but to dismount and ascertain by what means of twig or pebble, some mischievous urchin had contrived to hamper the latch. And the means were only

too apparent; a staple hasp and padlock presented themselves to his view on the other side!

“I suppose the Stokeshill people were beginning to take right of pathway across the fields to get to Hawkhurst,” was Barnsley’s private commentary on the circumstance. “In that case, Folkes is right to lock his gate. I can easily go on through the lane to the farm-yard.”

“So you’ve put a lock on Norcroft gate, I see?”—said he, addressing Farmer Folkes, who touched his straw hat with a knowing look, as Barnsley rode into the yard.

“No, Sir,—’twarnt I;—’twas by my Lord’s horders,” said the Kentish farmer, enjoying a joke at Barnsley’s expense, at whose expense so little else was to be enjoyed.

“*My Lord?*”

“I means my Lord Shur’am, Mr. Barnsley.”

“Why what the deuce has Lord Shoreham to do with *you*, Folkes?”

“ You see, Sir, Master Simons, the Wynnex bailiff, wur over here afore breakfast, a giving his orders; and *he* said nobody was on no account to be riding over the premises.”

“ But what right has Mr. Simons to give any orders about the matter?”

“ Why, warn’t you awar’, Sir as my Lord had bought the property?”—

“ Lord Shoreham buy Maplehurst?—You must be under some mistake?”

“ No, no, Sir,—I’ve too much at stake in the matter for a *mistake*.—Aw, aw, aw!—I wur ower at West’ton yesterday a’ternoon, with Muster Dobbs and his people.”—

“ But what have Mr. Dobbs and his people to say to the question?—Harpenden and Hill are acting for the late Dr. Dodwell’s estate?”

“ True, Sir; and Muster Dobbs signed with ‘em for the purchase o’ *this* estate in my Lord’s name, last night.—But what I went now for, war to meet Parson Drewe and Muster Simons

to settle with 'em about exchanging this 'ere farm as 't stands, for my Lord's farm up at Chestham, what is just now wacant. And so as they threw summut handsome into the bargain, why I made no bones of obliging my Lord ; and I'm to be out o' this afore Christmas."—

" And who are they going to put in here ? " demanded Barnsley, his heart sickening within him.

" Why, from what I do hear, Sir, I carkilate the new'uns be Lon'on folk.—Muster Simons, *he* said summut about the new tenant being a gemman, a friend o' the new Rector's ;—a gemman what used to be in business—"

" In *business* ? "

" Kept a slap-up public, Sir, summas nigh Turnham green, and 'orsed the 'ammersmith coaches."—

" Good Heavens ! "

" You see, Sir, when the kennel's moved ere, it 'll want some knowing chap to deal

with the 'untsman and whippers in, and they sort.—A 'twouldn't a done for a plain man like the likes o' me."

"The kennel? — whippers in?" — faltered poor Barnsley, involuntarily reverting to his fences and his experimental farm.

"Why 'arnt you 'eard, Sir, as my Lord 'ave taken the 'ounds?—They be to be called the Winnox 'arriers; and my Lord and Parson Drewe be to 'unt 'em."

"Good morning, Mr. Folkes," said Barnsley, unable longer to support the colloquy; and, turning the head of his mare, he pattered off along the lane towards Westerton!

## CHAPTER VII.

Let it be no bank or common stock, but every man be master of his own money; not that I altogether dislike banks, but they will hardly be brooked in regard of certain suspicions.

BACON'S ESSAYS.

SECOND thoughts are supposed to be better than first; and even third are not unfrequently an improvement. Barnsley set off from the barn yard at Maplehurst, fully resolved to proceed to the office of Harpenden and Hill, and unseal the vials of his wrath upon their heads. Within a mile of Westerton, he determined rather to modify his indignation, and throw

himself on his ward's mercy not to cry havoc and let slip a pack of fox hounds within a stone's throw of his park-palings ; but, while crossing the bridge, he suffered prudence to whisper into one ear and pride into the other ; and leaving the hounds to chance, and the attorneys to their conscience, he went his way quietly to the banking shop of his friend Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge.

“ So the lawyers have been too far north for you, eh ? ”—said Closeman, after listening to his tale of woe. “ Serves you right for expecting them to forgive you.”

“ Forgive me ? —*What?* ”

“ All the jobs you've been taking out of their hands for the last twenty years. Don't you know the story of the French farce-writer (Molly Eyre—or some such name) who wrote all his life against doctoring (that was his *doctrine*, eh ? )—and when he fell sick, and into the Doctor's hands at last—”

“ Well ? ”—

“ Why they killed him dead on the very *boards* of his theatre; (a *deal* too bad, eh?) But how came you to let two such fellows as Harpenden and Hill send you to the dogs,—or the dogs to you, eh,—Barnsley?”—

“ No matter! The mischief is done. The deuce of the business is the seven thousand pounds. Stocks have risen two and a half since Monday; and, if this news from Algiers should be true, we shall have them up higher to-morrow. Deuced unlucky moment!”

“ But what occasion is there for buying in just now? As long as you like your money to lie with us, we can afford to give you twice the interest you will get elsewhere. My hops clear me fourteen per cent this season, (went off at a hop, skip, and a jump.) There was a chap out of your parish here yesterday, (Dick Abdy, one of the Kentish yeomen who sets his face against government securities,) who brought us a pretty round sum to invest as we thought proper. This house has been doing its best

for Abdy these fifteen years, and he finds himself none the worse for us."

"I fancy 'tis the best thing I can do," said Barnsley, whose usually clear head was perplexed with visions of scarlet coats and velvet caps. "This election has cut me down wofully; I can't afford to make another gap in my income."

"*Gap?*—eh!—thinking of your hedges, eh! The word comes pretty pat to you already. Couldn't you indict those Drewe rascals for nuisances, to be prosecuted as the act directs?"

"I wish it were a laughing matter," said Barnsley, irritably; too sore in his feelings to bear the punches in the side habitually distributed by Closeman to his friends. "Just now that I am required to make something of a figure in the county, and go to considerable expense for a town-residence, I find my income reduced by—"

"But I tell you it need not be reduced!" cried Closeman. "Leave your seven thousand

pounds in our hands,—snug,—under the rose,—and—come let me see!—we'll treat you like one of ourselves; we'll undertake six per cent; giving you liberty to recall it at any moment that suits you."

"Well, well!—let us have it in black and white!" said Barnsley, thwarted on all sides, and scarcely caring for a life thus harassed. "Call in your clerk, and give me a stamped acknowledgment for the money; with a separate agreement for the interest. I am going to town to-morrow to consult with Fagg about the sufficiency of the release signed by Lord Shoreham. Those people are betraying so bad a spirit, that it is time I should look to my interests."

And, while the necessary papers were making out by a spruce young gentleman, blest with particularly large ears for the support of his pen and the absorption of every breath of news that entered the compting-house, Barnsley stood talking over his affairs, public and domes-

tic, with the banker; giving vent to all his grievances against Sullivan, and vows of vengeance against Parson Drewe. A copy of the acknowledgment was hastily signed on both sides, and deposited in the deed chest of the house; for, on hearing the voice of Timmins in the shop, Closeman hinted his advice to Barnsley to turn his heel upon the brazier, who had turned the tables upon him.

“At least,” thought Barnsley, as he reached his lodge-gates again, and entered the domain so long a realm of peace and happiness, “at least, I have got out of my dilemma about that floating money. Closeman, though deuced disagreeable, is a steady fellow; I have my eye always on the house; and, should any desirable investment present itself, nothing will be easier than to draw out the whole or part of the sum. I could not have afforded just now to lose the interest of my money.”

Next day, he was in London, reaping new nettles in Lincoln’s Inn; and, on the day fol-

lowing his return home, he proceeded with Margaret, according to a long standing engagement, to spend a day or two at Withamstead Hall. He had no great appetite for his visit. There was just that degree of neighbourhood between him and the old gentleman which, among people incapable of strong affections, passes for friendship. He would have been exceedingly sorry that electioneering should put asunder those whom the petty sessions had joined; but he knew that he was worth his weight in law-books to Lord Whithamstead. His practical edition of Burne's Justice was invaluable to his less erudite brother magistrate; and he had been the saving of five ton of hay per annum to the Hon. and Rev. Cyril, by stirring him up to the valorous self-sacrifice of taking tithe in kind, and plunging himself into hot water with his parishioners.

“ We shall see !”—soliloquized Barnsley;— (for though his daughter was in the chariot by his side as he drove up to the Hall door, he

never dreamed of addressing his remarks to *her*)—“we shall see whether in this instance honours change manners.” And, by dint of close investigation, he thought he could discern in the footmen who opened it, a peculiar jerk of the tags upon their shoulders, acquired since these badges of servitude had lashed their tails over buttons bearing a baronial coronet; and in the half embarrassed look of the old lady, a sort of shy consciousness, as if guessing what they must be thinking of. When she rose from her work-box to bid them welcome, instead of taking off her spectacles as was her wont on laying by her work and entering into conversation, she kept them on as a screen to her *mauvaise honte*. It was a sad thing to see a respectable old woman look so foolish; while, as to the two elderly Honourable young ladies, their tongues were so loosed by the desire of being affable, that a sluice-gate seemed suddenly spread to inundate the Low-Countries.

“Did you meet my brother?” inquired Fe-

licia of Barnsley. “ If you would step down towards the pheasantry, I should not be at all surprised if you were to meet my brother. It is by no means uncommon for Mr. Holloway to return that way from shooting.” Stupid George had risen prodigiously in their estimation since he was inscribed in the peerage as heir apparent to the barony of Witherhamstead. His sisters evidently thought him a wonder, whom the world would go forth into the wilderness to look upon.

Barnsley, however, being of a different opinion, crossed his legs in a comfortable arm-chair, well inclined to remain where he was. There was nothing in the sight of the Honourable George Holloway’s doeskin gaiters more enticing than in those of plain George; and he had begun twaddling with the old lady about white mustard seed;—cork-soles—and a recent overturn of the Westerton tallyho, in the genuine humdrum tone befitting a country visit, when a question and answer passing between the

Honourable Miss Felicia and her Honourable sister, revealed the fact that Sir Henry Woodgate was out shooting with their brother.

“Sir Henry Woodgate?”—cried Barnsley in a tone of amazement.

“Papa thought, (having heard of some sort of understanding between you), that you would not mind meeting Sir Henry,” observed Miss Holloway, amazed to find that any one could think so much of the importance of a man who, after all was only a baronet.

“Not the slightest,—not the slightest!” exclaimed Barnsley, secretly delighted that an opportunity should so soon present itself of improving his acquaintance with one whom it was his object to conciliate. “Has Mr. Holloway had tolerable sport lately? There are a good many partridges left towards Stokes-hill; but they are amazingly wild, out of all chance for any thing but a backwoodsman. By the way, I think I will step down and see

what Holloway has been about. I want to talk to him about some woodcocks which Job Hanson put up in one of my copses. Whereabouts did you say I should find him?" And, after receiving due information, away went the man of business, hoping to "put up" Sir Henry, who, as Closeman would have said, had so much difficulty in putting up with *him*.

" You are quite recovered, I find, my dear, from your measles?"—said the old lady, civilly intent on engaging Margaret in conversation; while sitting dozily in her arm-chair, before the fire, waiting for candles.

" The scarlet fever."

" I meant the scarlet fever!—Poor Lady Shpreham must have been sadly alarmed. However, they spent a very pleasant fortnight at Sandgate."

" Ramsgate, I believe."

" I meant Ramsgate. We crossed them in London as we were coming from Shrop-

shire, and they on their way into Suffolk."

" Buckhurst Lodge, Ma'am, is in Norfolk," corrected one of the better informed honourable young ladies.

" I meant Norfolk;—a very fine place it is, and a noble county;—the garden of England,—quite the garden of England."

" You are thinking of Kent, Ma'am," interrupted the other daughter. " You know we are all so accustomed to call our own county the garden of England."

" Yes, I meant Kent; if I recollect I never was in Norfolk; except once when we went (Mr. W. and myself—I mean Lord Withamstead and myself), to see Ickworth; and a charming town it was."

" I fancied Ickworth was in Suffolk?"—observed Margaret with some hesitation.

" I meant Suffolk, my dear; of course Suffolk or Norfolk, you know, is much the same

thing; but no one would think of confounding Norfolk and Kent; not but what I dare say the air of Norfolk may do poor Mrs. Sullivan a vast deal of good.” Margaret could not exactly follow the mental logic of the old lady. “ Natal air is said to be a fine cure for hectic complaints. I always thought it would be an excellent plan for Mrs. Sullivan to visit Norfolk.”

“ Mrs. Sullivan, Ma’am, you know was born at Brereton Castle, in Ireland,” observed her younger daughter.

“ My dear, I meant Ireland,” mumbled the old lady, shaking herself up, as she would have done one of Squills’s draughts; and trying not to appear more dozy than she could help. “ They say her son is to marry Lord Shoreham’s youngest sister.”

“ The elder of the Miss Drewes,—Miss Lucilla,” said her daughter. “ The one who plays so finely on the harp.”

“ Yes, I meant the one who plays so finely on the harp ;—that is I believe I meant—I’m sure I ——”

“ But you know, my dear Madam, Sir Henry was mentioning, at breakfast, that the Norfolk people pretend Mr. Brereton is engaged to his cousin Lady Lavinia Buckhurst.”

“ Is he—did they—did Sir Henry,—I’m afraid I’ve been a little sleepy, my dear,” said she addressing Margaret. “ I’m apt to have a short nap this frosty weather before candles are brought in.”

It was needless to inform Lady Withamstead that the frost which made her so sleepy, was fine open November weather calculated to render Parson Drewe the happiest of mankind ; she would of course have answered, “ for frosty, read mild.”

The poor old lady was wide awake, however, when seated an hour or two afterwards at her dinner table ; yet she did not appear much

more herself than during her nap. Her mind was perplexed by the sight of the family plate, (which instead of being old-fashioned, or fashioned of the middle ages, was middle-aged-fashioned), reburnished, and engraved with all the new-born pomps and vanities conferred by the herald's office. Not a salt spoon had escaped. And when the butler, (conceiving it a pity that his old master should have been at the trouble of being made a lord for nothing) kept asking for more fish for "my lord," "my lady" looked quite shamefaced.

With respect to stupid George, however, that which had made her shy, had made him bold. He now gave vent to the platitudes he had not found courage, as a commoner, to inflict upon his fellow-creatures ; and whereas dulness emphacized becomes twice as importunate as the gentle dulness that flows on, an eternal Lethe, "without *o'er*flowing, full,"—he was more tiresome than ever. Even Barnsley, who had a long standing regard for

George, and was in a mood of great animosity, could not help feeling that the ill-toned instrument was not half so offensive while restrained to village psalmody, as when now attempting the melodies of Rossini and Mozart ;—that so long as George Holloway had talked squire, of game laws, drill husbandry, boring for water, or boring for any thing else, his mediocrity was respectable ; but that the moment he attempted the balance of power or the international policy of Russia and France, he became drowsier than the drowsiest bagpipe. Lord Withamstead was the only person present disposed to argue with him ; but the poor old man having taken it into his head, or had it put there, that his plain commonsensical way of speaking in the commons must be exalted into something higher in the lords, fancied that in private as in public life, he must amend his style ; and the same consciousness of importance which made the son so voluble, rendered the father mum.

Sir Henry Woodgate sat by, not contemptuous, but contemplative. He had arrived that day at Withamstead, and was to pass two more there on his road to Dover previously to his embarkation for the continent; in order to fulfil a promise made to the new lord at the period of the election. He was desirous to show the old gentleman that he respected his motives of neutrality on that occasion, and was grateful for the cordiality with which the Holloways welcomed him back to his native country. His father had been godson to old Holloway; and his own name of Henry was derived from his father's of Richard Henry; the latter being added by Mr. and Mrs. Holloway in memory of a teething infant they had lost at the moment of little Woodgate's baptism.

“ To think that if my little Henry had lived he might have been your father !” was the old lady's adjuration, on first beholding the tall young baronet; for she was never celebrated

for the perspicuity of her ideas; and all the poetry of her matter of fact nature was attached to the memory of the babe whose loss constituted the only affliction of her harmless and uneventful life. Her elevation to rank was the grand event of her old age; the untimely death of poor little Henry the grand event of their youth; and Sir Henry appeared to be a sort of ideal descendant of the infant. She had insisted, when George was making out his statistical numbering of the tribe of Holloway for commemoration in the peerage that "Henry, born Aug. 4. 1787 died an infant," should be duly immortalized.

"Miss Agnes must be getting into years?" said Lady Withamstead, by way of entering into conversation with her young neighbour, not perceiving that Miss Felicia, the contemporary of Sir Richard Woodgate's only daughter, was biting her lips and bridling with indignation. "I remember your grandmother

and I lay in together;—I think it was with Cyril—let me see—no!—it was with my youngest daughter. Miss Woodgate must be near upon forty!"

" My aunt is one of those persons who have no age," observed Sir Henry. " The gentleness and benevolence of her disposition and the secluded life she has led, have left her all that bloom of mind which is the most valuable portion of youth."

" We all fancied in Kent that she would be very much cut up by the death of Mr. Smith," observed Miss Holloway, jealous of this rival claim to an autumnal spring.

" Mr. Smith?"—observed Sir Henry, puzzled to conjecture what affinity could exist between the names of Smith and Woodgate.

" My poor dear godson's tutor," added Lady Withamstead.

" I was so young at the period of my father's death," said Sir Henry, " and my

mother and grandmother had so many motives to avoid all recurrence to family histories, that Kent was an interdicted subject."

"But Mr. Smith held the living of Stokeshill at the time you quitted the place," said Miss Holloway.

"The living?—Smith?—True!—I perfectly recollect him now. A grave gentlemanly young man, against whom there existed some prejudice in the family; for he never came to the house."

"Never in your remembrance, perhaps. Miss Woodgate and he had formed an imprudent attachment, and when the living was given him as a reward for his services, he proposed for her to Sir Richard, who forbade him the house. It was always said that the old Lady Woodgate wished her grand-daughter to be happy in her own humble way; but your mother and Sir Richard were against the match. It was a sad thing for poor Mr. Smith when your family went abroad."

“ At least it served to put an end to the engagement,” said Sir Henry with something of the family prejudice.

“ Yes, and an end to *him*,” said Lady Withamstead. “ The poor young man was in weak health; and, six months after Mr. Barnsley took the Place, he was in the church-yard. Mr. Barnsley!—I think it was six months after you came to Stokeshill that the living fell in?”

“ There or thereabouts, ma’am,” replied Barnsley, withdrawing his attention for a moment from a discussion between George and his father, concerning bush drainage in high lying meadows. “ It was a very melancholy circumstance so soon after our instalment, the death of that young man!—a most amiable person, and, I fancy, of considerable attainments. He had no relations at hand, and I recollect officiating as chief mourner at his funeral.”

And Margaret, whose quick intelligence had

seized the whole chain of this melancholy history, could not help recollecting that ere the grass could have sprung upon the earth upturned by the grave of the young rector, her father must have passed it by as chief mourner at another funeral,—even that of her young mother! How often had she herself loitered in Stokeshill church-yard, near the grave-stone of “The reverend Julian Smith, rector of this parish ;” little suspecting that a broken heart lay beneath ; or that his untimely death had left behind on earth, a more than widow! Involuntarily her countenance became overclouded by this reference to her mother and the lover of Agnes Woodgate ; involuntarily she sighed over the unimpressible nature of a world to which beauty, youth, and tenderness, bequeath no trace save a tombstone above, and a little dust below ; when Miss Felicia, noticing the pensive air of the young lady of the party who was of course to be addressed only upon topics suitable to young

ladies, suddenly addressed her across the table with, “ I suppose, Miss Barnsley, you are quite on the *qui vive* with the prospect of having the Wynnex hounds so near you?—I dare say you expect hunt-balls, and breakfasts when the hounds throw off? I knew we should have fine doings in the neighbourhood when Lord Shoreham came of age !”

Margaret Barnsley coloured to the temples at this ill-timed sally; and Sir Henry, startled by the apostrophe and looking towards her, attributed this sudden flush to delight at the improvement of her prospect. The reverie produced by a disclosure of sentiments and sorrows on the part of his gentle aunt, of which hitherto he had entertained no suspicion, was disagreeably interrupted. He did not want to be recalled from Agnes Woodgate to a Mr. or Miss Barnsley.

“ A poor, weak, trivial girl !” was his mental commentary on the young lady’s blush; for Sir Henry was at the age when young men, if

not blinded by beauty, are always on the look out for mental superiority. Fascinated by the lofty sentiments of Helen Sullivan, the decision of her manners, the superiority of her address, he made no allowance for the confidence inspired by her position in society, the encouragement of a mother's presence, the love and support of her brothers; and, while admiring in Helen the pride of the parterre, tended, trimmed and cultivated into beauty, did not sufficiently appreciate in Margaret the wild flower whose unpropped blossoms derive their luxuriance only from the summer showers, and the unsullied sunshine of Heaven.

Of Sir Henry meanwhile, Margaret Barnsley's impressions were far more favourable. He had long occupied an undue share of her thoughts as the idol of those by whom she lived surrounded; yet every word she heard him utter, every feeling she could trace as influential over his conduct, seemed to excuse the infatuation

of the Stokesfielders in his favour. She liked the perfect independence, the almost surly recklessness of his manners. Still disgusted by her first insight into the basenesses and servility of the world, she admired his undisguised indifference to the suffrage of society. She was dazzled by his scorn, captivated by his indifference. She was delighted by the look of approval cast by Woodgate on her father, when, in answer to the injudicious interrogatories of the all-discussing George Holloway, Barnsley expressed his opinion of Lord Shoreham.

“ I should be sorry to decide upon the young man’s character from his conduct towards myself,” said he, in a tone of indulgence that greatly enhanced his own dignity. “ Lord Shoreham has fallen into the hands of advisers, from whose influence his father’s insight into their character seemed to have secured his youth and inexperience ; but time will probably exhibit both myself and them to him in

a truer light. Meanwhile, I will not pronounce too harsh a judgment upon the son of an old friend, because his boyhood is swayed by evil counsel. Though neither I nor mine shall ever set foot again in Wynnex Abbey, it will gratify me to learn that Lord Shoreham obtains an honourable place in the opinion of the county."

Such sentiments, Margaret perceived, were doing more to remove Sir Henry's prejudices against her father than all the courtesies Barnsley could offer; and she retired that night to rest with strong hopes that a good understanding might be eventually established between the families. She thought that if Woodgate and her father should happen to ride together on the morrow, Sir Henry could not fail to be pleased with her father's zeal for the benefit of his parish and the county. Aware how high a value was set by others upon Mr. Barnsley's activity as a public man, and his sagacity as a founder of penitentiaries

and originator of savings' banks, she ancied that even the romantic Woodgate must appreciate the practical philosophy of his successor at Stokeshill.

Instead of missishly deliberating, as she laid her head upon her pillow, upon the colour of the ribbons likely to attract at the breakfast table the approval of Woodgate, she considered only in what light her father would appear, should the conversation happen to fall on such or such a topic. She recollects that in certain dissertations upon prison discipline, the abolition of slavery, the suppression of capital punishments, between Barnsley and the amiable but feeble-minded Edward Sullivan, her father always came off victorious, and felt that if feelings of mutual regard should ever bring Sir Henry Woodgate a guest to Stokeshill,—then—

But of what use to ponder on such a contingency?—On proceeding, rather late, to the breakfast table the following morning, for

young ladies who muse upon their pillows overnight are apt to be behind-hand in the morning, she found the party assembled over their muffins and newspapers, listening to the holding forth of the hon. George. The circle was complete, with the exception of her own vacant chair; yet no Sir Henry was visible; nor did any one seem to notice his absence. They made answer to each other's insignificant remarks, without missing the master spirit that would have supplied them with strong arguments and generous sentiments; and Lady Withamstead sat, spectacles on nose, seeking for fashionable news in the *Times*, and politics in the *Morning Post*, without once sufficiently forgetting herself to pour tea into the supernumerary cup before her. Though Sir Henry was absent, for once, she was not.

Margaret longed to inquire whether their dinner was likely to prove more interesting than the breakfast; when Miss Felicia, suddenly interrupting George's discussion of the

comparative porcelaineous qualities of the tea-cups of Worcester, Derby, Swansea, and Colebrook Dale, startled her with the intelligence that Sir Henry was off to Dovor by daylight ; summoned away by letters which had followed him from London, containing news of the indisposition of Countess van Pierssen.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Avec nombreuse compagnie,  
Le chasseur parcourt le canton.  
Touton, touton, toutaine, touton !

BÉRANGER'S SONGS.

IT was perhaps fortunate for Barnsley that parliament assembled for the session three weeks earlier than had been anticipated; for firm as he was in his intention of not being provoked into open war by his enemies at Wynnex, it required almost more than human patience to bear the incursions of the Wynnex

harriers, and the brutes, biped and quadruped, by which they were followed to the field. Scarcely a day passed but his keepers, with ill-repressed glee, or his bailiff with ill-disguised satisfaction, did a tale unfold of the devastations committed upon his premises under the sanction of Parson Drewe ; for, though Gus had progressed back to his office, after Christmas, to take his snuff and pare his nails at the expense of the nation, Alfred remained behind, to baptize the newborn, bury the dead, and suppress the foxes of the parish of Wynnex ; extracting a new book of lamentations from the man of Stokeshill.

It was vexatious to poor Margaret to perceive the daily increasing irritability of her father under these minor miseries ; which, though they served to line the barrel of Regulus only with tin tacks and tenpenny nails, formed a tormenting source of petty martyrdom. His natural love of order,—his pride in the neatness of his farm,—his desire to promote

purity of morals in the district,—all his pet predilections were thwarted by the sportsman-like appropriation of Maplehurst;—his hobbies were treated with as little respect as any other bundle of sticks on his estate. The Parson, instead of going round to an open gate to avoid one of his fences, would attack one of his fences to avoid an open gate; and, as Barnsley had not found courage to withdraw from the sporting association formed by the gentlemen of east Kent, Parson Drewe contrived so to hunt his nephew's pack that a good run appeared less an object than that the scent should lead across the very lawns of Stokeshill Place.

No sooner, however, was Mr. Barnsley fairly settled at Osborn's Hotel in the Adelphi, and the Withamsteads in Bruton Street (for Great George Street was already renounced as unlordly), than Margaret was beset by new uneasiness. She began to doubt whether the wisdom, available in legislating for hun-

dreds, would prove equally so in legislating for millions. She had heard, for such was the favourite cant of Tory times, that a senator must be born a senator; that it required a peculiar order of man to act in parliament. Though convinced that her father had too much good sense to put himself forward as a speaker, she feared he might not realize the expectations of the constituents purchased with his six thousand seven hundred pounds. As he had not received, it seemed unlikely he should return, his money's worth.

To tranquillize these misgivings, she had no means of obtaining information. The papers delight to tell of Broughams and Peels, Macauleys and Stanleys; but are remiss in informing the nation in what manner a Mr. John Barnsley plays his part as a committee man; or delivers his few words inaudible in the gallery. Six months hence, she might possibly catch up a whisper that “poor Barnsley made a wretched member;” that “the Westerton

electors were exceedingly dissatisfied with poor Barnsley ;" that Brazier Timmins had observed at a meeting, at the Winchelsea Arms, that Barnsley, after Holloway, was like chalk after cheese.

All this might not have fluttered the spirit of any girl less susceptible than Margaret. But she was all daughter. No other passion diverted the current of that purest of instinctive feelings. Her father was the object whose existence she was born to illustrate ; " for that cause came she into the world." Her perception of this obligation had not been clearly developed till she found him disparaged at Wynnex Abbey ; and had his election enabled her to whisper to herself, " Now, thank God, he has attained a positive station in the county," she would have been content. But what if his failure in parliament should depress him below his former level ?

It was not till after Easter that her father was to take a house in town for Miss Winston and

herself. At present, they remained *tête-à-tête* at Stokeshill; but Margaret, thoroughly emancipated from the school-room, was now at liberty to read, work, and walk at hours of her own choosing. Ever since the poor governess had been brought to a true estimate of her pupil's value, by the hazard of losing her, she admitted that Margaret was too admirably disposed to require subjection; and Miss Winston was now more gratified at finding herself loved as a friend, than ever she had been at finding herself obeyed as a governess. But it was not to such a friend Margaret could confide her misgivings. Knowing her to be in communication with the Squillses, Dobbses, Holdfasts, and other worthies of Westerton, she would not breathe a word implying mistrust in her father. In this case, as it ought to be in all which involve the weaknesses of those we love, she would confide her cares to no living mortal.

While such were the dilemmas of the Barns-

leys, it must not be supposed that the house of Drewe was exempt from tribulation. If Barnsley felt mortified and indignant at the results of his exertions at Wynnex, what was poor Lady Shoreham, at the frustration of her maternal projects?—She who had educated her son with a view to shining in society,—to lady-killing at Almacks, to being hunted by dowagers, adored by this flirt, or accepted as an adorer by that; she, who wished him to be the fashion,—to give bachelor balls, and family dinners,—to be courted by artists, fêted by foreigners, a sort of duodecimo Duke of Devonshire;—she to behold the knowing Viscount establish himself a Corinthian,—of somewhat more refined brass than the common herd, but still of brass! It matters little whether the cigar smoked in the public streets be of pure Havannah or coarse pigtail. Slang is still slang, whether emitted from between teeth which borrow their enamel from Delcroix's shop, or teeth which have recently escaped the hard impeachment of the

Fives' Court. The man brought up disorderly to the watch-house, may return to a bed of down in Curzon-street, or to a garret in the Seven Dials. But the nature of both reprobates is the same. One will end at the treadmill, the other in the King's Bench ; but the same clay, the same *mud*, predominates in the frame of both.

Lady Shoreham, if she saw not all this philosophically, saw it practically. In her eagerness to form the manners of a man of the world, she had made him *plus Arabe qu'en Arabie*,—too knowing for even these times of universal knowledge. Fearful of discrediting petticoat government by producing a milksop ; instead of a pigeon there flew forth from her maternal nest, a crow !

But odious as the young Viscount was likely to be pronounced by the coteries, and offensive as she considered his ingratitude towards his father's executors, towards herself his injuries were doubly ungrateful. Already she experienced the bitterness of having reared a thank-

less child. The worldly-wise uncles insinuated to Lord Shoreham that his mother's influence alone had caused such an undue transfer of authority to the attorney; that Barnsley and the widow were playing into each other's hands; that Lady Shoreham's object, after securing all she could for herself and daughters, was to fix herself, like a leaden weight, at Wynnex Abbey. They advised that her plans should be "knocked on the head at once;"—and Lord Shoreham lost no time in apprizing his mother, that a large party of "fellows" were coming to keep Christmas with him, who were likely to keep it after a fashion that rendered the place inaccessible to ladies. "After the departure of that sick girl of Barnsley's," he observed, "he wished the Abbey to become Bachelor Hall."

His breach with Barnsley having rendered it impossible for the executors to suggest the addition to his sisters' fortunes from the savings of his minority, Lord Tynemouth had under-

taken to make the proposition to his nephew ; but Lord Shoreham's motion that the question should be adjourned *sine die*, was of so peremptory a nature, that it was evident his reply of—“ We'll talk of all that some other time,” was such as would have been simplified by Gus or the Parson into—“ It's no go !”

Lady Shoreham, infinitely mortified, accepted the friendly invitation of her kind-hearted brother that, instead of proceeding to Brighton as she proposed, they would all pass the winter with him at Tynemouth Castle ; and the girls were overjoyed. The splendid hospitality of a first-rate English country-house was a thing of which their continental gaieties had given them no idea ; and after a week's exclamation against the bad taste of Shoreham in adopting the slang habits of his uncles, they set about being happier at Tynemouth than they had expected to be at Wynnex.

Not so, their mother. Lady Shoreham was touched in the tenderest point, both as a

woman, and a woman of the world :—her only son had thrown her off,—and Lord Shoreham was pronounced to be the worst possible style of young man. She even learned from the solicitors that those of Lord Shoreham were raising considerable objections to the defrayment of her ladyship's extravagant improvements, and her ladyship's fantastical upholstery ; but to this trait of shabbiness, the incensed mother replied by addressing so high-toned and spirited a remonstrance to her son, that even Parson Drewe admitted “ the pewter must be stumped up,” and her ladyship's contracts fulfilled.

In addition to these offences on the part of her son, Lady Shoreham had to bewail the unaccountable defalcation of Mr. Brereton. In parting with the family at Ramsgate, he stated himself to be under an engagement to conduct his mother and sister to the Duke of Grantville's in Norfolk ; after which, he proposed accepting the invitation of Lord Tyne-mouth. But from Buckhurst Lodge, as christ-

mas approached, came a lame sort of apology, and throughout their holiday festivities poor Lucilla wore the willow. The gossip of the newspapers soon announced that—"among the English fashionables figuring at the court of Brussels, were Sir Henry Woodgate and Mr. Sullivan Brereton of Brereton Castle;"—and, while Jessie and Flora saluted her with Gylbin Horner's exclamation of—"Lost,—lost,—lost," Lucilla declared herself enchanted to have found him out; and began to long for London and new conquests.

The Countess Van Pierssen, meanwhile, on recovering from an attack, which her desire to attract Sir Henry to Brussels had caused her to fancy dangerous, saw nothing to lament in his loss of an election which would have fixed him permanently in a county she detested; and, when at Miss Woodgate's request Sir Henry agreed to spend a month with her at Brussels, and in company with his consequential friend Brereton, assumed a distinguished position in so-

ciety, her vanity was completely gratified. Next to her diamond *aigrette*, her palace at the Hague, and chateau on the Scheldt, there was nothing she prized so highly as her son ; and, thanks to the recommendation of her own high Spanish descent, she did not despair of uniting him to the webfooted heiress of Count Piersen's cousin, Baron von Schwip-schweischenbach,—grandee of Spain, and Hereditary Grand Master of the ancient order of the Grampus.

## CHAPTER IX.

Time makes the mulberry leaf, brocade.

SPANISH PROVERB.

FROM the moment of Mr. Barnsley's offering himself as a candidate for the representation of Westerton, Margaret had deeply regretted the direction his ambition was taking;—nor was she reconciled to his pretensions even when she found herself settled, after Easter, in a comfortable house in Curzon Street, with a handsome carriage and establishment at her com-

mand, and the prospect of a season's fêtes to enliven the perspective.

Margaret was conscious of her own inadequacy to figure in that struggle of selfishness, vanity, and scorn. Ignorant of the value of heiress-ship to eight thousand a year in combination with youth and beauty, she dreaded the overpowering brilliancy, a crowd such as had surrounded her at the Wynnex *féte*; and, shrinking from an encounter with dozens of Lord Shorehams, and hundreds of Sullivan Breretons, longed to adhere in London to the habits of seclusion she had acquired in the country.

But Barnsley had already placed his daughter's destinies out of his own jurisdiction. Lord and Lady Walmer, the grandees of Kent who had extended such gracious notice to him at Wynnex, were now his intimate acquaintance. The Countess,—one of those busy female politicians who smell out a new vote as readily as mosquitos a new comer into the tropics,—

had fixed upon him to perform in the chorus of her political opera;—and she was not only anxious to attach him to her own faction, but to detach him from that of the Marstons. Dazzled by the condescension with which, the moment they were aware of his being in town, Lord Walmer left a visiting ticket and Lady Walmer an invitation-card at his hotel, and, charmed by the affability with which her Ladyship inquired after the charming Miss Barnsley with whom she had been made acquainted by Lady Shoreham, Barnsley took courage to ask her advice as to the best mode of introducing Margaret. That her Ladyship's counsels were of a more ambitious latitude than comported with his previous projects, was undeniable;—but with Margaret's fortune and beauty, and Lady Walmers's flattering offer to present her at court and assign her a seat in her opera-box, it seemed a superfluous act of humility to restrict his girl to the narrow sphere of society which might be properly considered her own.

The Countess, whose managing disposition could scarcely allow a chair or table she looked upon to remain in its place, was not sorry to have a young lady on whom to practice the art of chaperonage, previously to the *début* of her own beautiful little Lady Eva ; and, as the only daughter of a rich member of parliament, entertained little doubt that Margaret would attain, under her patronage, such a connexion in life as would bind the vote of the member for Westerton eternally her own. Herself a woman of unblemished character, she was as proud of her virtue as vain of her abilities ; and appreciating the full value of the countenance she was about to bestow on the obscure country girl, trusted to find in Margaret Barnsley unqualified submission to her dictation.

“ Pray, my dear Miss Barnsley, have you any acquaintances in London ?”—she demanded of Margaret, during the *entr'acte* of the opera, the first night of fulfilling her engagement towards her *protégée*.

“ Only the daughters of Lady Withamstead, Lady Shoreham and Mrs. Sullivan, our Kentish neighbours,” replied Margaret.

“ So much the better. As it was unlikely you should have formed any desirable intimacies, I am better pleased you should know no one but the Drewes.”

“ The Drewes and ——”

“ Oh ! the Holloways count for nothing ; *they* are people with whom it is impossible to keep up an acquaintance in town, and as to the Sullivans, the sons are abroad, and Helen devotes herself to her mother, so that you will never meet. With the exception, therefore, of Lady Shoreham, I hope you will encourage no familiarity on the part of the neighbours to whom you allude. I make it a point to drop Kent, the moment I come to town.”

Before the conclusion of Lady Walmer’s elementary lecture, Margaret was thoroughly disenchanted with her prospects ; and, shy as she was, would almost rather have encountered

the crowd of London society with her father, or renounced at once its pomps and vanities, than place herself under the tutelage of a woman evidently accustomed to weigh human merit against the hard and dazzling diamond weights of fashion.

“ I am not *myself* among these people !”—was her remark some time afterwards to Miss Winston, who had now subsided into the elderly home-staying friend, assisting her to receive visitors and settle with the housekeeper, and was perhaps the happier for having her position in the house irrevocably defined. “ Every one, it is true, is kind to me. Hearing us announced at balls as Lady Walmer and Miss Barnsley, they conclude me to be related to the Walmers ; and, from the tone that prevails in addressing me compared with that in which I *overheard* myself spoken of at Wynnex, I am convinced every one is in error with respect to my position in life. I know so little of the world, that I cannot at present deter-

mine what extent of degradation is conveyed in Lord Shoreham's expression of 'the attorney's daughter ;' but I cannot blind myself to the fact, that I have none of those noble relationships which seem to lend so much importance to other people. Of my mother's family, I scarcely know the name : of my father's relations, I remember only to have seen, in my childhood a gruff, ill-mannered brother-in-law, named Heaphy, and a Mr. Winchmore,—but him, I think, I understood to be a man of business, and my mother's trustee. My uncle Clement is likely to pass his life in India ; and it is clear that I have no support to expect from family connexions."

" I am not aware that any other members of Mr. or Mrs. Barnsley's family survive," said Miss Winston, embarrassed by a suspicion that these observations were interrogatively addressed to her, and scrupulous to afford no information withheld by her patron. " But your father's fortune and position in the world

entitle you to appear in any society ; and it would be an unworthy mistrust of yourself, my dear, if you felt inferior in——”

“ *Inferior?*”—interrupted Margaret, with something of the spirit of Helen Sullivan kindling in her expressive eyes. “ Dearest Miss Winston, do not so mistake me!—You would rebuke my pride rather than my humility, did you know how wickedly I am tempted to look down upon half the frivolous people with whom I have made acquaintance.”

“ Lady Walmer is considered a very sensible woman——”

“ Her kindness exempts *her* from all investigation or remark on my part. Besides, *she* seems to have an object in life, and to act up to it. Those with whom I find fault have made themselves odious to me by their affectation ; they can neither sit, stand, nor speak in a natural way. Lady Henry Marston, for instance, a good person in her own family, and fond of her husband and children,

becomes so conceited the moment she goes into the world, that I feel as if addressing a different person. I should fancy her in the last stage of a decline, had I not happened to see her at dinner and luncheon. As to the men,—but why should I talk of them? They are not worse than Mr. Brereton, Lord Shoreham, and his uncles.”

“ You must put yourself into better humour with the world, my dear child,” said Miss Winston, with a melancholy smile; “ for, unless I am much mistaken, it is among those whom you meet at Lady Walmers, your father expects you to settle for life.”

“ Marry one of those artificial cold hearted men?”—cried Margaret, no longer fearing to pronounce the word in presence of her governess.—“ Never!—I would sooner be wife to Edward Sullivan. If I did not love, at least I should never despise him.”

“ But you know, my dear, your father

would not listen to the proposals of Mr. Edward."

" Nor have I the least desire that he should have done so. But surely you do not think papa would urge me to marry any one against my inclinations?—With respect to going into society, or choosing any particular chaperon, or a more showy style of dress, I never presume to consider my own inclinations in preference to his. But marriage is so serious a thing,—so intimate a thing,—a thing so absolutely involving one's happiness or misery,—that I could not sacrifice myself in that.—No! I cannot, I will not, believe that my father would force to marry me against my inclinations!"

" Do not agitate yourself thus, my dearest Margery," said her kind-hearted friend, terrified to perceive the blue veins swelling in her swan-like throat, and a vivid blush mantling on the cheek of her pupil. " I have no reason to suppose Mr. Barnsley has any immediate

views for you. But he mentioned to me last night with so much glee the sensation produced by your beauty, and some encomiums that have appeared in the newspapers—”

“ Yes—they praised me as Lady Walmer’s lovely and accomplished niece,—they would not have hazarded a remark had they supposed me to be only ‘ the attorney’s daughter.’ ”

“ Take care, Margaret; or I shall begin to think you envious of the distinctions of rank; or at least disposed to set undue value upon them.”

“ No, dearest friend—I am convinced you do me more justice!—But make some allowance for the soreness of my feelings in entering a world, where I find the one thing needful to be a qualification beyond the attainment of human will;—a qualification which our christian faith instructs us to disregard;—a qualification to which, till within the last year, I never so much as heard an allusion;—and my de-

ficiency in which, contemptible as it may be in a moral sense, must influence my destinies to the latest moment of my existence!—I feel this for myself, dear Miss Winston, but I feel it also for my father.”

“ I am almost inclined to fear, my dear,” said the anxious governess, taking off her spectacles and laying aside Alison’s Sermons, “ that you have already allowed your feelings to get the better of you.”

“ No!”—answered Margaret with a smile, rising from her chair and seating herself closer to her friend.

“ I really fear you have formed some attachment!”

“ It would be easy still to answer—no!” said Margaret, leaning towards Miss Winston and throwing one arm over her shoulder. “ But I should hate myself for trying to deceive you, who are as much of a mother to me as any thing not a mother can be—now more especially that your kindness invites my confidence.

But there are some grievanees which one only increases by talking of them. I always bear my finger aches stoutly, till I have told you I am in pain ; when, from the tenderness of your care and inquiries, I begin to fancy myself very ill."

" But, on this occasion, I promise not to inquire !" said Miss Winston, patting her on the arm, touched by the childlike tenderness of her manner.

" You promise ?—honour bright ?—Then I own I *have* seen the man whom of all others I should like to marry ; and that he is the man who, of all others, would least like to marry *me*. Not a word more !—If you have penetrated my secret, indulge me by being silent towards myself as well as towards others. I know I have nothing to hope or expect ; but, while the impression on my mind exists, it must prevent my gratifying the ambition of my father."

—Miss Winston, unwilling to reply with se-

verity to this first confidence,—still less with encouragement such as she felt circumstances would never justify, fidgeted on her chair and shook her head.

“ Tell me, at least, that I have your good wishes?”—said Margaret with some emotion, feeling at that moment the want of motherly caution or comfort.

“ Heaven grant you patience and fortitude, my dear child!”—said the governess, with a degree of unction greater even than her pupil desired. “ With so much to ensure you a happy settlement in life, I hoped you had nothing at least to fear from the bitterness of disappointed affections; but God’s will be done!”

From that day, however, Margaret made it so much a point to speak cheerfully of her position and prospects, that Miss Winston was relieved from her momentary alarm lest her young charge should be cherishing illusions fatal to her happiness. Miss Barnsley

seemed to enjoy the opera, Almacks, public promenades and private entertainments, as much as if above the reach of sentimental griefs. Her father, greatly elated by her success and his own—for his maiden speech was crowned with laurels, verdant as the myrtle-wreath conceded to his daughter,—assigned no bounds to his pecuniary liberalities. Every enhancement to the toilet which coquetry could desire, was at Margaret's disposal ; and the Arabian on which she accompanied him daily in the park, such as even a Molyneux might envy. He was proud that his colleagues should see him accompanied by so lovely a daughter, with so graceful a seat, on so fine a horse. He was proud that the Morning Post should commemorate on the same day some luminous little speech of his on the reduction of the hop duty, and the brilliancy of the charming Miss Barnsley in a costumed quadrille at some charity ball patronized by Lady Walmer. His utmost hopes and

expectations were fulfilled. He was becoming a man of business in the widest sense of the word. He was now a public man. His sphere of usefulness was enlarged from a county to a country. Instead of the Westerton House of Correction, or Maidstone Lunatic Asylum, he had now Newgate and Bethlem to claim his attention ;—Milbank was his washpot, and over Brixton did he cast his shoe.

But, above all, he was distant thirty miles from Westerton, and thirty-two from Stokes-hill !—He was beyond reach of the petty swarm of gnats which of late had fastened on him, leaving him neither peace nor patience. From his house in Curzon Street, with its pleasant dinner parties and visiting list of ladies fair and lords unfair, he could defy the Hawkins and Timmins part of the community, slip from between the fingers of a Dobbs, and show himself loftily indifferent to the persecutions of the sporting Parson. The hunting season was over. Even Lord

Shoreham had exchanged his scarlet coat for the well-fitting garb that fitted him for the window at Crockford's; so that he had no further fear for his fences. All he ever heard of Stokeshill was in an occasional letter from his bailiff, to tell him "Wheats was looking remarkable well; and that a week's rain would bring up the grass for a topping hay season." Even the ghost of his departed enemy was laid. He had no fear of being molested in London by the apparition of Sir Ranulph de Woodgate.

On one point, indeed, Mr. Barnsley's triumph over his molestations and molestors was so complete, as painfully to influence the best feelings of his nature. The evening papers accounted to him one night as he sat at Bellamy's for the absence of his honourable brother member by "regretting to state, that Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst was confined to his bed by the effects of a fall from his horse, by which his collarbone

was fractured, which began to threaten serious results ;” on the very day following, he was startled by perusing “ Died, universally lamented, at his house in Berkeley Square, Edward Sullivan Esq. of Hawkhurst Hill in the county of Kent, member of parliament during the last four sessions for the borough of Westerton. Mr. S., who was a claimant for the ancient barony of Chilton, (the estates of which have been five hundred years in the Sullivan family,) was married to a sister of the late Lord Brereton of Brereton castle in the county of Cork, by whom he had several children ; the eldest of whom succeeded the deceased Lord B. in his Irish estates, and is on the eve of marriage with his cousin, Lady Lavinia Buckhurst, youngest daughter of the Duke of Grantville.”

To do Barnsley justice, he was shocked by the suddenness of the event. He would have given much that his old neighbour had died in charity with him. Greatly as he had rea-

son to resent the bitterness of Sullivan's enmity, he would have gladly sacrificed his own, that they might have shaken hands to part in peace. But it was now too late. Margaret recalled him to himself, when, on his return home, he communicated the melancholy tidings, by an exclamation of—"Now then, I suppose, Sir Henry Woodgate will come in for Westerton."

And so it proved.—Lord Withamstead stopped his bran new family coach (of which the very blinkers of the harness groaned under the weight of armorial bearings), to inform Barnsley that the thing was done;—that nothing but the showy manifestations in Sir Henry's favour at the preceding election had prevented his own son George from coming forward. "I hope," observed the old gentleman good humouredly at parting, "that as unanimous and friendly a feeling may always prevail between you and that young man, as there did betwixt my late lamented friend Sul-

livan, and myself, during the five and twenty years we sat together."

Barnsley smiled, and hoped so, too ; but his conviction said nay. Woodgate was twenty years his junior ;—a man likely to be as speculative in his politics as the principles of rigid toryism will admit ; while Barnsley himself was as practical as a pulley. He could not but anticipate, moreover, occasional chafings against his own pride from the pride of his coadjutor. He would fain have done all the work of Westerton in the name and for the behalf of stupid George Holloway, rather than live in immediate contact with Sir Henry Woodgate.

Whether Margaret's views coincided or not with those of her father, she was judicious enough to keep them to herself. Lady Walmer complimented her on the brilliancy of her bloom, on the day the newspapers announced among the arrivals by the Salamander steam-packet from Ostend, the man

whom her father would gladly have left vegetating in Lethe's wharf,—*i. e.* his father-in-law's château on the Scheldt; while Miss Winston, though faithful to her engagement of not allowing the fatal name to be pronounced between them, could not forbear pressing Margaret's hand, as they walked together out of the breakfast room, after Barnsley's perusal of the announcement.

“ Do you know any thing of this young man, my dear ?”—observed Lady Walmer on learning that the seat vacated by the death of Mr. Sullivan was already filled.

“ Very little,” replied Margaret, “ I saw him for the first time when I had first the honour of meeting your Ladyship at Wynnex. There was a considerable degree of unfriendly feeling between him and my father at the Westerton election.”

“ How came he, by the way, to contest it with your father ?—Sir Henry, I fancy, is on the right side ?”—

“ Their politics, I believe, are the same.”

“ And their age too different to admit of any other competitions.”

“ Sir Henry Woodgate must naturally feel mortified at seeing my father supersede him at Stokeshill Place.”

“ Supersede him ?”—

“ It was of Sir Henry’s grandfather, Sir Richard, that my father purchased the estate.”

“ Purchased the estate,—your father purchase the estate?”—cried Lady Walmer. “ What a misapprehension have I been under all this time! I know nothing of the Westerton side of the county; and when, on the night of the Wynnex ball, Lord Walmer in pointing out various people to me said something about the Stokeshill family being one of the most ancient in Kent, I concluded he was alluding to your father.”

“ Perhaps,” said Margaret, with firmness,

“ had you been aware that he was a new comer into the county, and belonging to a family wholly undistinguished by birth, I might have been unhonoured with the flattering kindness I have received?—In that case——”

“ No, my dear,” interrupted Lady Walmer; “ your father asked my advice about disposing of you in London, and I was happy to be able to oblige him by an offer of my services as chaperon. But now I am personally acquainted with you, and derive so much daily satisfaction from your cheerful companionship and gentle manners, it is yourself to whom I am desirous to prove of use.”

And this was strictly true. Margaret, so unassuming in spite of her beauty and heiresship, had made many friends in Lady Walmer’s society, but not a single enemy; and though the Countess was vexed at being obliged to curtail the list of her *protégée’s*

qualifications of the antiquity of descent she had hitherto proclaimed as her birthright, she felt pledged to secure a brilliant establishment for one who had been initiated into society under her auspices.

Meanwhile, it required some forbearance, on Margaret's part, to refrain from interrogating her father respecting the tone adopted towards him by his brother member. She fancied her father was out of spirits. He seemed absent,—perplexed; nor was it till he had gathered from his daughter the particulars of a ball at Lady de Hartenfield's, a sister of Lady Walmer, at which she had been present the preceding night, and danced three times with Lord Buckhurst, only son of the Duke of Grantville, that his brows unbent.

“ Three times?—Why, Margery! you must have made a conquest of the young Marquis; eh! my dear?—eh! Miss Winston?”—said he, rubbing his hands.

“ Lord Buckhurst seemed to have heard of me, papa, from his cousin Helen.”

“ And a great deal more, I suppose, from his cousin, Helen’s brother Edward ?—”

“ Poor Edward was scarcely likely to dispose him in my favour. He has asked leave of Lady Walmer to be of our party to Ascot races.”

“ I wish you joy, my dear, of your admirer. No young lady loses in the world by its being known that the heir of a dukedom is in her train ; but there is something injurious in the report that a younger brother, such as Edward Sullivan, has presumed to propose. If poor Mr. Sullivan could but know that the nephew he was so proud of was following his son’s steps to Stokeshill Place, he would hardly rest in his grave.”

“ He need entertain no alarm,” observed Margaret. “ I have not the least vocation for becoming a duchess. I would promise without hesitation that—”

“ Make no rash vows, my dear !” interrupted her father with a smile. “ It is time enough to refuse Lord Buckhurst when he has made his proposals.”

## CHAPTER X.

A creature of a more exalted kind,  
Conscious of thought,—of more capacious breast ;  
For empire form'd, and fit to rule the rest.

DRYDEN.

MARGARET BARNESLEY could not repent the want of courage which had prevented her writing to Lady Walmer to return the subscription for Almacks for which she felt indebted to the application made by the Countess under a false impression of her claims, when, on the following Wednesday, she found her-

self the observed of all observers at the best ball of the season.

It is difficult for a very young girl to remain proof against the intoxications of vanity, when she finds young and old, men and women, passing and repassing for the satisfaction of a glimpse of her sweet face. There is pleasure in the very flutter of spirits created by general homage; and apathetic indeed must be the character of one who can remain insensible to such a triumph.

“ My dear Miss Barnsley,” said Jessie Devereux, extending her hand to Margaret through the crowd, “ do you know you are becoming so terribly the fashion that there is no getting at you, even to deliver a message. I had a letter yesterday from Paris from Lucilla, (my aunt, and her daughters, you know, went abroad immediately on quitting Tynemouth and are going to Baden for the summer) who bid me ask you, if, when you return to Kent, you—my dear,” she whis-

pered, having accomplished her object of getting close to Margaret,—“ *do* find out for us from Lord Buckhurst whether things are really fixed for his sister Lady Lavinia’s marriage with that wretch Brereton. Aunt Shoreham wrote to papa to inquire for her; and he did not know to whom to address himself without compromising the dignity of the family.”

“ I will ascertain the particulars for you, as far as I am able,” replied Margaret, gratified to find that her father’s estrangement from Wynnex had done them no harm with the rational members of the family; “ but I have very little acquaintance with Lord Buckhurst.”

“ Nonsense, my dear!—All London knows that he is dying in love for you. Ha! here is that horrid Sir Henry Woodgate!—That is the worst of Almacks! All other nights of the week, one’s balls are safe from the parliamentary bores, not one of whom in sixty is good for anything but to frighten the crows, or give one the vapours.”

The waltz coming just then to a close, preparations were making round Lady Walmer's *protégée* and her friend, for the quadrille about to commence ; when Lord Buckhurst came forward to claim the hand of Margaret with a degree of presumptuousness such as only the sons of Dukes, even when in love, seem privileged in assuming. But, when about to take their place, no *vis-à-vis* was at their disposal ; and Lord Buckhurst set forth in search of some disengaged couple, whom he hoped to appropriate with the same authority he had exercised over Miss Barnsley.

“ Paget, have you a *vis-à-vis* ?—Bagot, have you a *vis-à-vis* ?—Fitzroy, have you a *vis-à-vis* ? Salfiore, have you a *vis-à-vis* ?” cried he, in succession, to every one he met ; to which interrogations, some said “ yes,”—some “ no,”—and all passed by to the fulfilment of engagements of their own.

Musard's preparatory flourish of the bow proclaiming the case to be imminent, Lord

Buckhurst's demands on his young friends became more urgent. Either he was afraid of losing his turn with his pretty partner, or afraid of not getting it over to keep faith with others equally fair. "Lord John, do get a partner and stand opposite to us!" cried he. "Sandgate, my dear fellow! be good-natured, and make a *vis-à-vis* for us." But Lord John did not choose to get a partner, and Lord Sandgate was not good-natured; and it was in the last despair of little Collinet's premonitory cadence, that Lord Buckhurst suddenly exclaimed—"Ha!—Woodgate! how are you? when did you come to England? Miss Devereux allow me to present Sir Henry Woodgate, —Woodgate, Miss Devereux. Stand up, or we shall lose our places. There is room next to Lady Honoria C ———"

Sir Henry would willingly have explained that he did not want to dance; and Miss Devereux made a pouting bow to express that she had already the honour of Sir Henry's

acquaintance. But Buckhurst loved himself too sincerely to be disappointed ; and his “Come, come ! Woodgate, lead your partner to her place,” was too absolute to admit of resistance without offence to the young lady. Sir Henry had not been brought up in the school of the Drewes. Aunt Agnes afforded in his mind so exquisite an illustration of the sex, that he seldom found it in his heart to demean himself ungraciously towards a woman.

Annoyed, however, at being forced to dance, which was by no means his favourite diversion, Sir Henry deposited his hat ; and hurried round the half-pleased, half-angry, Jessie, to the vacant place.

The quadrille commenced ; and Sir Henry had half walked the first figure, when he was struck by the resemblance of Lord Buckhurst’s graceful partner to the attorney’s daughter whom he had left dieting on milk and water at Withamstead Hall. She had the dark hair,

creamy complexion, grey eyes rendered expressive by the blackest eyebrows and eyelashes ;—nay, a certain indescribably graceful turn of head and shoulders, which he remembered as peculiar to Miss Barnsley. But the fair one to whom Lord Buckhurst was devoting his attentions, was at once more airy and more self-composed than Margaret ; and the beautiful precision of her dress, and arrangement of her hair, proclaimed the experienced votary of fashion. There was nothing of the country girl,—nothing of the attorney's daughter, in the distinguished elegance of his *vis-à-vis*.

On a first impulse, Woodgate was about to interrogate his partner whom he had seen conversing with her. But Jessie Devereux, indignant at his haughty apathy, had commenced a flirting conversation with her neighbour's partner,—a minikin ensign in the Guards, enchanted to be flirted with by any lady, on any terms ;—and Sir Henry reminded himself that it would be too great a condescension on the

part of a Woodgate, to exercise unnecessary curiosity respecting a Barnsley.

When the figure of *La Poule*, however, brought him into hand-to-hand contact with the subject of his perplexity, Margaret removed all doubt by a slight bow of recognition. She *noticed* him,—he *felt* that she noticed him; and, such is the distinction conferred by beauty, that Sir Henry was forced to admit Miss Barnsley had acquired a right to become condescending. Her personal charms afforded a title as unimpeachable as his honours of twenty descentes.

Still she puzzled him. He could not understand how a few months of London,—of dancing-masters, milliners, and *coiffeurs*,—had conferred such singular distinction—a distinction warring against all his theories of the vulgarity of artificial life. For it was not alone in lightness of step, in lightness of waist, in glossiness of tresses, that Margaret evinced her progress towards perfection. There was now

an air of refinement in her gestures, of intelligence in her glances, which, if attributable to the influence of fashionable society, revealed a force in the grinding powers of that vast polishing mill, such as the coarsest granite must confess. Little did he know of the more potent charm exercised through the feelings over a young and delicate girl, whom nature makes fair, but Love, lovely!—of the spell which, in presence of the being whose presence is joy, imparts buoyancy to the step, brilliancy to the eye; and to the lips a beaming expression of innocent delight, such as may have brightened the looks of Eve when she discovered the first violet in paradise.

The admiration with which Sir Henry stood contemplating the attractions of a far nobler looking girl than the noblest of the beauties gracing King William's Flemish court, was soon to end. Margaret, not being one of the practised London damsels who are always “looking for mamma” on the arm of their

last partner, went straight to Lady Walmer; and the almost maternal pride with which the most distinguished matron in London received back the attorney's daughter, completed the amazement of Sir Henry.

After conveying Miss Devereux to Lord Tynemouth, by whose side it was the cue of his two giddy daughters to stand for chaperonage while his Lordship talked to some noble country neighbour of agricultural business, or to the President of the Council of homocultural business,—of drill husbandry, as exercised over hundreds of acres or thousands of men,—Sir Henry tried to return towards the spot where Lady Walmer had returned his bow. He had almost coaxed his ill-humour into the condescension of inviting Miss Barnsley to dance with him. For the moment, Stokeshill disappeared from his memory,—perhaps Helen Sullivan, also;—he saw only the graceful figure of the gentle Margaret.

Still, some invincible repugnance retarded

his steps. He loitered by the way for a word with his old Eton chum, Lord Fitz-Henry, and to exchange a solemn salutation with the Belgian ambassador; and, by the time he caught sight of the bouquets of heath ornamenting the ball-dress of the Almack's Ariel, she was moving towards the dance on the arm of the most grand seigneurial of modern grand seigneurs, whose fiat confers fashion, as that of sovereigns nobility.

“*Elle est charmante!*”—said Prince E—— to Lady Walmer, gazing after them, at the moment Sir Henry came up.

“*Ravissante!*” exclaimed Lord Evergreen, propped on a cane which performed the part of crutch, and a near-sighted eye-glass, whose powers were exactly adapted to the last days of Methusaleh. “A relation of your Ladyship’s?”—

“A Kentish heiress, whose father has considerable influence, and votes with *us*,” replied Lady Walmer.

“ I never saw poor Buckhurst so desperate before,” observed Woodgate’s friend, Lord Fitz-Henry, who had accompanied him towards the group. “ One generally sees him in love three times a season ;—before Easter, with the last new dance from Paris,—after Easter, with the last new beauty from the country,—and on the eve of grouse and the Highlands, with the last woman left to ride with him in the park.”

“ So long as he finds safety in numbers, the Duke of Grantville has nothing to fear,” observed Sir Henry, in too low a voice to be overheard by Lady Walmer.

“ *Fear !—*His family think of nothing but marrying him. If Buckhurst were to die, the Dukedom would be extinct, and the estates go to Lady Maria and Lady Lavinia (which was Brereton’s motive, I suspect, for jilting Lucilla Drew). Buckhurst was just then in his first love fit of the season for some Mademoiselle

Adeline or other; and, counting on his eternal constancy, Brereton proposed to his ugly cousin and a contingency of twenty thousand a year.”

“ Of which I wish him joy, should the Duke of Grantville consent to Buckhurst’s marriage with Miss Barnsley.”

“ The Duke consent?—the question is Miss Barnsley’s consent!”

“ Miss Barnsley’s consent!” — ejaculated Woodgate with infinite disdain.

“ I can tell you, my dear fellow, that it is not to be had for asking for. She refused Sir William Ross, who has that splendid Cheshire property and Lord Ross’s reversion, the first week she came out; and poor Buckhurst is driven almost out of his wits by her insensibility. I would take twenty to one that if Buckhurst proposed to her to-night, she would refuse him.”

“ What’s the bet?” — demanded Augustus

Drewe, who had sauntered towards them and involuntarily pricked up his ears at the sound of odds.

“ That Lady Walmer’s pretty heiress refuses Buckhurst.”

“ Refuses him what ?”—

“ Her hand, if he should propose to her.”

“ Propose to *her* ?—for whom ?—His father’s groom of the chambers ?”—

“ Propose to make her Lady Buckhurst !” observed Sir Henry Woodgate, disgusted by the cool insolence of Gus.

“ I thought little Adeline was Lady Buckhurst ?”—

“ I am talking of a marriage between the Duke of Grantville’s son—”

“ And a Kentish attorney’s daughter !” interrupted Drewe, without moving a muscle of his countenance ; — a match between Marmaduke and a cart-filly.”

“ Such comparisons are indeed odious !” cried Sir Henry Woodgate, not choosing to

sanction opprobrious terms applied to the idol of his young friend Edward Sullivan. “ Miss Barnsley is a charming girl ; and Lord Buckhurst in a position that enables him to overlook her deficiencies of rank.”

“ Yes !—much as the Monument overlooks the mud of Blackfriars.”

“ By all accounts, the mud on this occasion does not aspire to reach the Monument,” said Fitz-Henry.

“ Grapes are sour, eh ?—taken warning by my Lady sister-in-law, who made a dead set at Brereton, only to be set down.—Deep ‘uns all the Buckhursts, from A to Z.—Take *my* word, for it Lord Buckhurst will never be fastened on by a country Miss.”—

Lord Fitz-Henry looked significantly at Woodgate, as if longing to retort in the words of Midas—

“ *I* take your word,—I would not take your bond, Sir !” and Augustus Drewe, having sauntered a few feet further on the road to his supper at Crock-

ford's, Sir Henry could not resist observing to his friend—"What on earth brings such a man as that into a ball-room!"

"To get rid of the hours between his coffee and maraschino, and devilled turkey. Almack's is as good a place to cast the slough of his *ennui* as any other. I look upon Gus as I do on one of the shrivelled leaves of Hyde Park,—blown hither and thither, and withered out of all quality of use or ornament."

"As little susceptible of pleasurable emotions, as of imparting them!" added Sir Henry. "Such men ought to seek their recreation in clubs, and kennels, the betting stand and the prize ring."

"By Jove! old Gus gets served out in his turn even at his club," observed Lord F., who was one of Lord Shoreham's set. "The other day, at the Travellers', he was boring Scamper who is just returned from Alexandria in his yacht, with questions about the plague and the Pyramids; when little Quickset, of the Guards, in-

terfered with—‘ Egad, Gus, *you* ought to know more about them than any of us ; for you talk like a hieroglyphic, and look like a mummy.’’

Sir Henry replied by a forced laugh. His attention was engrossed by Margaret, as she moved with noiseless step in the quadrille before him. There was something at once so free from bashfulness, display or affectation, in her looks and movements, that with self-reproving candour, he was forced to admit good breeding to be an agreeable qualification. Though every eye was bent upon her, she neither assumed a downcast air nor confronted the admiring glances of her noble partner. She was perfectly at ease ;—more at her ease *there*, when playing so brilliant a part in the most brilliant of assemblies, than when surrounded by her own people at Wynnex Abbey.

By degrees, — almost mechanically, — Sir Henry circled round the quadrille, little dreaming how accurately his movements were noted by the magnet which attracted him ; and, gra-

dually approaching Margaret, requested the honour of her hand for the following quadrille.—“She was engaged to the Duke of Caserta,” one of the Neapolitan *attachés*. “The quadrille following?”—Still engaged. But Margaret replied to these flattering invitations with a blush so deep, as seemed to darken the hue of her serene eyes to violet. She was, in truth, supremely gratified.

“It won’t do, my dear fellow!”—cried Quickset of the guards, an old Eton friend of Woodgate’s, tapping him on the back as he retired from the scene of defeat.

“What won’t do?”—

“Your making up to the Kentish heiress, who vows she won’t stand any thing under a peerage.”

“I am not making up to her, and I suspect she has taken no such vow,” said Sir Henry calmly; amused to find himself, twice in the same evening, standing forth as the champion of Barnsley’s daughter.

“Likely enough,—for it was your friend

Shoreham who told me so. Shoreham had a narrow escape from her himself. Her father was his steward or some such thing."

" Mr. Barnsley was one of the late Lord Shoreham's executors."

" Executor?—Well! there's only a pinch of pounce between the two. But Shoreham swears that whenever little Miss was naughty and wouldn't say her lesson, they used to threaten her she would never be Lady Shoreham. Her father almost proposed her to Shoreham. I suppose he thought it the decentest mode of restituting part of what he had robbed during the minority."

" I have always heard that Mr. Barnsley strictly performed his duties as executor to Lord Shoreham."

" All I know is," said Quickset, " that Parson Drewe and his brother smoked the whole band of them out of Wynnex Abbey."

" I should think a little fumigation might be no bad thing there, even now," observed Sir Henry; and thus, quizzed out of a third

attempt to obtain Margaret as his partner, he retired for the night.

It is surprising how easily clever men are quizzed out of their projects, considering how widely quizzing prevails in the world. Byron, despising his age as an age of cant, converted it into the age of irony ;—an age, whose physiognomy is impressed with a perpetual sneer,—whose hymns are epigrams,—whose Curtana, a doubly-pointed rapier.

Sir Henry Woodgate, with courage to face an election contest or a Hyrcanian bear, retreated before the quips and quirks of a small ensign in his Majesty's Coldstream guards !

## CHAPTER XI.

You know my father hath no child but I, nor none is like to have ; and truly when he dies, thou shalt be his heir ; for what he hath taken away from thy father I will render thee again in affection.

SHAKSPEARE.

MARGARET felt happy in the recollection, (when her garland of heath was exchanged for her considering cap, or night cap), that since she had been included in Lady Walmer's invitations and occupied a seat in her opera box, she met, every night, nearly the same set of persons. Lord Buckhurst and the Duke

of Caserta never seemed absent from her side.

But her inference that because she had met Sir Henry Woodgate at Almack's, where these two adorers were always in waiting, she must meet him at all other parties where they were in attendance, proved erroneous. From Wednesday till the Wednesday ensuing, she saw no more of him. Her father, indeed, spoke of him as likely to prove an excellent member ; a threat which Margaret attributed to the novel attractions of the House of Commons. But, on the arrival of the eventful half-holiday which the nation allows its Helots and lady patronesses have made their own, she prepared herself to find Sir Henry Woodgate stationed at his former post, opposite the orchestra. Nor was she disappointed. As she passed up the room with Lady Walmer, he invited her to dance. But alas ! she was already engaged ; and, fearing he might attribute these reiterated refusals to ill will, she ventured to observe

with a humility of manner that excused the impropriety of such a proceeding,—“ I am engaged now ; but, for the next quadrille, I have no partner.”

For the next quadrille, consequently, they stood up together ; and the first question suggested by Sir Henry’s gratitude for her concession, regarded Helen Sullivan.

“ I have been most anxious,” said he, as he led her from Lady Walmer’s side, “ to meet you again. I can obtain no satisfactory intelligence concerning Mrs. Sullivan and her daughter. The servants at the house in town pretend not to know whether they are at Hawkhurst or in Norfolk ?”

“ You are surely aware,” said Margaret, as drily as she was capable of speaking, “ that since the election, we have held no communication with Hawkhurst ?”—

“ I was sorry to learn that the part taken by Mr. Sullivan in my favour, had produced a coolness between your father and himself.”

“ On the contrary, the breach between him and my father, produced I believe poor Mr. Sullivan’s efforts in your favour,” observed Margaret, calmly. “ But do not let us talk of him.—Peace be with the dead.”—

“ Before we quit the subject, however, suffer me to inquire whether you have heard nothing of your friend, from Lord Buckhurst?”—

“ I have never heard Lord Buckhurst mention the name of the Sullivans. He concludes, I suppose, that the subject cannot be agreeable to me.”

“ Let us change it, then!” said Sir Henry, with a smile. “ Exonerate me, however, by bringing to mind that there *was* a time when Helena and Hermia were not more”—

Do not say *was*,”—interrupted Margaret. “ I still dearly love my friend Helen. I wrote to her at her father’s death, and have received no answer to my letter; but the precarious state of Mrs. Sullivan’s health probably requires

her constant attendance. I am not sure whether they are at Hawkhurst.

“ Thank you,” said Sir Henry, stiffly. “ I must try to obtain further intelligence to-morrow, for your account is more concise than satisfactory.” And a movement in the quadrille prevented all necessity for a rejoinder.

“ You have been passing the winter, I think, in Belgium ?”—inquired Margaret, when the first pause brought them together. “ I hope you left Miss Woodgate well ?”—

“ Quite well ; but I have been less with her than you may suppose. Agnes is one of those self-denying people who will not even accept the society of those she loves, when she imagines them likely to be better amused elsewhere. My mother wished to have me with her for the carnival, after recovering the dangerous attack of fever which called me away from Withamstead last December.”

“ Then you had a very gay season ?”—

“ I am not a ball man,—not a military man,—and the fêtes of the Princess Royal were no less thrown away upon me than the reviews of Prince Frederick. But it was as easy to devote myself to my own pursuits in my mother’s hotel, as I am likely to find it in town.

“ You have now a more active life before you,” said Margaret. “ Papa finds his time wholly occupied with business.”

“ So, I fancy he did in Kent. It is on account of the multiplicity of Mr. Barnsley’s avocations, I conclude, that Lady Walmer officiates as your chaperon ?” —

“ Ah !—you are aiming to know the motive of Lady Walmer’s good-nature in producing to society a person so obscure as myself ?” interrupted Margaret, with an arch smile.

“ Pardon me,” replied Sir Henry, relapsing into something of his former contemptuous sternness,—so ungenial to his reserved temper

was any familiar pleasantry which tended to overthrow him from his pedestal,—“ I form no surmises on subjects which do not concern me.”

And, during the remainder of the quadrille, he uttered not a syllable. His bow, on resigning her hand to Lady Walmer, bore unequivocal marks of displeasure.

“ What a disagreeable fellow my friend Woodgate is grown!” observed Lord Fitz-Henry, who was still standing in conversation with Lady Walmer.

“ He is not generally agreeable;—he is no popularity seeker,”—observed Margaret.

“ Which *I* call a great impertinence.”

“ Every thing depends upon the degree in which we are accountable to society,” replied Margaret, in a low voice.

“ Every one is accountable to society!” observed Lord Fitz-Henry, who had never before heard Lady Walmer’s *protégée* express so decided an opinion.

“ Every *woman*.—But though *we* are the bond-slaves of the world, I cannot consider a man to be in the same subservient position.”

“ My friend Woodgate, in short, has a right to be as disagreeable as he pleases ?”

Margaret smiled, almost assentingly, but made no answer.

“ ‘Tis curious enough, faith,” said Lord Fitz-Henry, “ that only a week ago, I heard Woodgate take up your defence, in this very room ;—and now you have become his champion ! Yet, when I watched you dancing just now, you seemed to have only incivilities to bestow upon each other.”

“ Of whom are you speaking, Lord Fitz-Henry ?”—inquired Lady Walmer, joining in the conversation. “ That is the first suspicious charge I have heard made against my young friend.”

Margaret coloured deeply ; for she was by no means inclined that Lady Walmer’s atten-

tion should be directed towards Sir Henry Woodgate. Her blush confirmed the suspicions of Lord Fitz-Henry.

“ We were talking of Lord Buckhurst,” said he, with a significant glance at Margaret ; who, not choosing to enter into a confederacy on such a subject, replied frankly, “ No,—we were talking of Sir Henry Woodgate.” Lady Walmer put up her glass,—her customary mode of screening the expression of her countenance when she heard what she did not like. She was too desirous to make Margaret a Duchess, to approve of the petulance attributed by Lord Fitz-Henry to Woodgate’s influence over her *protégée*. It happened, however, that Margaret accidentally set forth the only qualification of Sir Henry likely to raise him in the estimation of the Countess, by adding,—“ of Sir Henry Woodgate, who has just come into parliament for Wester-ton.”

“ Upon the same principles as your father ?” demanded Lady Walmer, with a scrutinizing glance.

“ The same political principles.”

Lady Walmer replied by a stare, which seemed to inquire, “ What other principles exist in the civilized world ?” But, as Lord Buckhurst just then made his appearance, to mount guard over Margaret for the remainder of the evening, it seemed desirable to drop all further consideration of the man or member, whose cause was so warmly defended by Miss Barnsley.

That night, Margaret retired to rest uneasy. Sir Henry had pointedly avoided all further occasion of addressing her. It was plain that he was irrevocably offended. Having met in the doorway of the tea-room, he contrived to elevate his chin, and pass her by without letting fall a look upon her, with a gesture copied from one, of whose gestures all London seems bent on imitation. Margaret

felt an oppression at her heart while recollecting that on the following and the Friday night, questions of great moment would be before the house, and Sir Henry doubtless at his post; and that it might be a week before they met again. A week contained seven days!—Seven days' estrangement might fix him in irremediable dislike!—Seven such days were worse than seven weeks spent by herself at Stokeshill and Sir Henry at Ghent.

On the Saturday night, however, as Lady Walmer and herself were hastening up to their opera-box for the second act of the *Gazza*, they were met at the top of the stairs by Lord Henry Marston; who, being stopped by the Countess with an inquiry concerning some particular of the preceding night's debate, referred her to Woodgate, who was on his arm, and whom he took the opportunity to present in form to her Ladyship's acquaintance.

Occasions for a little fine lady *tripotage* were never neglected by Lady Walmer. The

distinctions of whig and tory were almost less important in her eyes, than the distinction which marked the tories of Lord Walmer's flock from those of Lord Henry Marston ; and, longing to see the red cross on the shoulder of this new knight, she extended a gracious invitation to Sir Henry into her box, which Miss Barnsley, with a beating heart, heard courteously accepted. Nothing was easier than to fix her attention upon Malibran, the moment they arrived in the box,—leaving Lady Walmer to expend upon Woodgate the full flow of that political jargon which she mistook for argument ; but, at intervals, she could not fail to catch words and phrases, such as she was now habituated to hear fall from the finely-formed lips of Lady Walmer, more especially when so fortunate as to obtain a new auditor.

*If women could but know, par parenthèse how completely they disfigure themselves by talking politics !—If they would but believe*

now unfitted to the texture of a woman's mind and the habits of her education, is a subject demanding the assiduous study even of a vigorous, manly understanding!—It is not a few phrases pirated from the pamphlets of the day, or the conversation of those public men who deign to accept, in their political night-gown and slippers, the incense of a circle of fair votaresses that suffice to qualify the dissertations into which we hear these would-be Aspasiahs plunge headlong, like Sam Patch into the Fall of Niagara!—Lady Walmer, always beautiful, often brilliant, and endowed with a thousand womanly attractions, little dreamed how immeasurably she sank in the estimation of every man of sense, when indulging in such tirades as that with which she was boring Sir Henry Woodgate. Political tirades were scarcely endurable from the lips of a Madame de Staël, and are but an unmeaning mystification from those of any other woman. Such attempts remind one, *not* of Helen smiling gracefully in the armour of

Paris, but of Venus rapping her delicate knuckles by hammering the anvil of Vulcan !

Some such commentary as this was probably passing in the mind of Sir Henry, as he attempted to appear to listen ; for Margaret noticed that he did not even attempt to appear to reply :—he kept his oratory for his speeches in the house, and his judgment for the speeches of others. But the moment a new visitor appeared in the box, who, being an ambassador, was entitled to a fresh outpouring of Lady Walmer's diplomatic tactics, Woodgate leaned towards Miss Barnsley to inquire, in a courteous tone, whether he should have the pleasure of meeting her at a ball at Devonshire House the following Monday ?—Under such encouragement, she bore patiently with the silly prattle of Lord Buckhurst, after Sir Henry had left the box !

A happy surprise, too, awaited her on the morrow. Mr. Barnsley, having given her a list of

persons to whom she was to address dinner cards for the following Saturday, there appeared among them the name of Sir Henry ; for though, after the custom of parliamentary dinners, no ladies were to appear at table, Margaret was pleased at the idea of any advance in acquaintanceship between Woodgate and her father. She wished him to see “ the attorney” presiding like a gentleman and a man of sense, over his well-appointed household.

But alas ! the answer was negative. There was studied courtesy indeed, in the phrasing of the excuse, which went so far as to mention that it was to Lord Henry Marston he was under a pre-engagement, as if to certify the authenticity of the plea ; and, on the Monday night, when Barnsley by invitation escorted his pretty daughter to Devonshire House, Sir Henry so pointedly repeated the expression of his regrets, that he seemed to invite the invitation which followed. This time, however, it was not a political dinner ; but to meet Lord

Withamstead's family and a few other Kentish neighbours, without ceremony, on the following day.

“ Young Woodgate and I get on together pretty well now,” was Barnsley’s remark to Margaret, while waiting to resign her to Lady Walmer, the moment the Countess made her appearance ; “ which is very lucky, as we have so often to act in unison. I sat near him the other day at the Speaker’s dinner ; and was gratified by the change in his demeanour towards me, since poor Sullivan’s death.”

Mr. Barnsley was, in fact, in a state of mind to be satisfied with all the world !—He had been congratulated by three persons, or personages, since he entered the room, upon his daughter’s approaching marriage with Lord Buckhurst ; and as Margaret, who was dancing with the young Marquis, was not at hand, to interpose the contradiction she would probably have given, in terms not to be mistaken for girlish coyness, the rumour only gained con-

firation from his flurried mode of protesting that he knew nothing of the matter. The mere report of such a thing enchanted him ; for, with the exception of the management of the The-lusson property, or his own appointment to be Lord Chancellor, what could inspire him with such glee, as the idea of beholding his daughter a duchess ?—

There was something almost chimerical to Barnsley in the social distinctions he had already attained. After his labours in his county's cause, his alliance with Wynnex Abbey, his officious administration of all the business of all the world, it was to the fact of being father to a daughter just then the idol of the *beau-monde*, he was indebted for being present at a ball at Devonshire House. His own activity had got him into the House of Commons :— Margaret's beauty, into the House of Lords. All his life long he had been looking to membership of parliament, as the thing that was to institute his station in the world ; and

now the eminence of which he had been twenty years ambitious, was achieved by a little insignificant girl, who, throughout those twenty years, had been sporting unnoticed by his side!—Still,—for the discovery was a reproof to his self-love,—he could not help feeling that Margaret's beauty might have bloomed unseen, but for the prominent point in which she was placed by the fosterage of Lady Walmer;—a tribute indisputably paid to his seat in parliament.

Such was the line of argument by which Barnsley strove to satisfy himself that Margaret's strawberry-leaves were but a substitute for the laurels which ought to have crowned his own deserts;—and the grave face with which he stood, hat in hand, among the outermost *cordons sanitaires* of elderlies and chaperons, elicited in his favour more than one remark of—“No trace certainly of his daughter's beauty in that Mr. Barnsley;—but a worthy, country-gentlemanlike looking man,—quite the air of a county

member." Margaret would have more been gratified, had she overheard these comments, than by all the exaggerated enthusiasm lavished on herself.

It was perhaps the agreeable impression produced on Barnsley's mind by the events of the ball, which caused him to grant an immediate assent to his daughter's application for leave to visit the Sullivans, the following morning. They were in Berkeley Square for a day, on their way from Hawkhurst to Leamington; and Helen had written to request, in her mother's name, that Margaret would pay them a visit.

"Yes, my dear,—order the carriage after breakfast, and wait upon Mrs. Sullivan. I have no wish to perpetuate family quarrels. I would willingly bury all recollection of the past in poor Sullivan's grave!"—said he; and the graciousness of this remark caused Margaret to look admiringly towards Miss Winston, who shook her head in pathetic sympathy with the christian benevolence of her patron. Neither

of them suspected that Barnsley was alive only to the necessity of conciliating every collateral member of the Buckhurst family, with a view to the approaching aggrandizement of his child.

On entering Mrs. Sullivan's room, Margaret was deeply affected by the sight of her pallor and exhaustion. It was impossible to doubt that her valuable life was drawing to an end; that the eyes so dim and hollow, were about to open to the radiant glories of eternity. Miss Barnsley approached the couch of the dying woman with a degree of reverence amounting to awe; and could not refrain from affectionately pressing the hand of Helen, at the idea that her young friend, lately so happy, in the love and protection of her parents, was about to become an orphan.

Mrs. Sullivan smiled faintly as she approached; and not only extended her transparent feverish hand to bid her welcome, but drew her gently down and imprinted a kiss

upon her forehead. Margaret trusted that the invalid was too much self-engrossed to mark her emotion; too young to know that a dying mother's thoughts are seldom otherwise engrossed than by the destinies of her children.

“ My dear Margaret,” said Mrs. Sullivan,—“ I sent for you from all the gay scenes you are engaged in, *not* that you might be dispirited by the sight of that dear girl's black gown, or her mother's pale face; but because I am ordered to Leamington, as a last chance of recovery, and feel that there is very little probability of my return.”

“ Do not say so, dear Mrs. Sullivan,” said Margaret, taking her place on the low stool pushed forward by Helen to the side of her mother's sofa. “ Change of air and scene—”

Mrs. Sullivan interrupted this established routine of sick-room condolence. “ No! all *that* is over,” said she, with gasping breath; “ and I wished to see you, my dear Margaret,—for we shall never meet again.”

Helen Sullivan withdrew precipitately. She had wished to be present at the interview ; but, feeling it impossible to restrain her feelings while her mother talked in that voice, and that strain,—she flew to her own room to sob away her agony unmolested,—that worst of agonies,—the parting of a good daughter from a tender mother.

“ It has been long my wish, my dear,” continued Mrs. Sullivan, “ to say a few words to you respecting my son Edward.” Margaret’s colour went and came, as she sat trembling at the idea of the pain she might be about to inflict, in replying to the dying mother’s interrogations. “ I am aware of the answer given by your father, and yourself under your father’s authority, to his proposals. All I wish to learn is, whether the plea assigned of your youth and Mr. Barnsley’s desire to postpone your settlement in life, was the *real* objection ?”

“ I—I—believe so,—” faltered Margaret.

“ As regards yourself, you must be *certain*. Was it because you felt too young to marry, that——?”

“ I acted wholly in obedience to my father’s commands,” interrupted Margaret, wishing to anticipate the inquiry.

“ And your father’s objections were grounded partly on your inexperience, and partly on the want of fortune of my son ?”—

Margaret hesitated.

“ Dear Margaret, own the truth,” said the poor invalid, in a tone of encouragement. “ Your father thought, as he had a right to think, that you were entitled to connect yourself more advantageously than with a younger son ?”

“ I believe such was his opinion.”

“ Thank God !” — feebly ejaculated Mrs. Sullivan, clasping her hands upon her hollow bosom. “ I may, therefore, hope to witness, ere I die, the happiness of my beloved son !— Edward’s fortunes are wholly changed by the

recent calamity in our family. It was not our custom to pry into my poor husband's affairs. I knew I might rely on his equity, and never troubled myself to inquire respecting either my own prospects or my children's. But, since everything has been in the hands of lawyers, it has come out that the Brereton estates cannot be held by the holder of the Hawkhurst property. My eldest son, having naturally inherited the Sullivan property, resigns the name and estates of Brereton to his brother Edward. Your father, I trust, will form no objection to a young man of unblemished character, with a fortune of nearly ten thousand a year, and every prospect of a revival of the Chilton peerage."

Margaret was silent.

"Surely, my dear child, you do not imagine that his ambition has still higher views for you?"—faltered Mrs. Sullivan.

"So few months have elapsed since he re-

fused Mr. Edward Sullivan's proposals, on the grounds of my being too young, that ———”

“ But you admitted, just now, that this objection was a pretext?”

“ Indeed, dear Mrs. Sullivan, I have no reason to think papa wishes me to marry.”

“ Not immediately. But with a highly advantageous proposal, he would scarcely refuse to accede to a conditional engagement?”

“ Not if he knew my affections to be engaged.”

“ But, my dearest Margaret, you surely will have no further reserves from your father?— You will prove, on such an occasion, that you possess some firmness of character?—that you have ceased to be a child and have put away childish things.”

Involuntarily, Margaret took the hand of the poor invalid, who was courting the infliction of so much pain.

“ Edward was with me during the three

months I spent at Buckhurst with my sister," resumed Mrs. Sullivan. "The arrangements for my eldest son's marriage with his cousin Lavinia, brought this subject naturally into discussion between us; and he admitted his conviction, that if you could be brought to make a declaration of the state of your feelings to Mr. Barnsley, your father would relent in his favour."

A little nettled at this cool inference of her preference, Margaret took courage to observe — "I do not imagine that any confessions I have to make would alter my father's views of the case."

"At all events, the trial is worth attempting," said poor Mrs. Sullivan, blinded by her maternal predilections. "Edward is on the point of addressing to Mr. Barnsley a statement of the altered nature of his prospects; which, after all that has passed, you must admit to be a considerable sacrifice of pride on the part of my son. But he wishes to obtain such a previous

promise of support on your part, as may warrant him in the renewal of his addresses."

"But indeed, I have none to give!"—cried Margaret, unable to stoop to further dissimulation. "I do assure you, dearest Mrs. Sullivan, that Edward's accession of fortune will effect no change either in my father's sentiments or my own."

"At least, my dear, it serves to remove your objections?"—

Margaret was again silent.

"Am I to conclude then," demanded Mrs. Sullivan, after a pause, deeply mortified by this unlooked-for check of her expectations, "that you are not sufficiently attached to Edward to become his wife?"—

Still, Margaret was silent.

"Poor Edward!—either he has deceived himself or you have strangely deceived him!"—said Mrs. Sullivan, withdrawing her hand from Margaret's shoulder.

"You are displeased with me; yet, believe

me, I am not to blame!" said Margaret. "Edward was my playfellow. I loved him as I love Helen,—though in a less degree. The idea of love or marriage, as connected with myself or him, had never entered my head when he wrote that rash letter of proposal. It was easy, therefore, to obey, when my father bade me write word that I was too young to marry. I have never seen Edward since;—nor at any time felt disposed to think of him as a lover."

"And have you seen no other person, Margaret, of whom you feel inclined to think as a lover?" said Mrs. Sullivan, faintly.

"I have acquired no right to avow a preference for any other," said Margaret.

"Some hope, then, still remains for Edward?"

"*None*,—even were my affections disengaged," said Margaret, hurt to find herself thus unfairly pressed. "My father has received such cruel affronts from Mr. Brereton, and others of his

family, that I could not even desire him to overlook his resentment."

"Even were your affections disengaged!"—reiterated Mrs. Sullivan, caring only for the first words of the sentence. "You *have*, then, formed an attachment?"

"I have, Madam,—a presumptuous and unauthorized attachment,—but one that I feel will—"

She paused. A low knock was heard at the door; and Helen peeping in, acquainted her mother that her cousin Buckhurst was on the stairs.

"Go to him, my love!" said Mrs. Sullivan, faintly. But Lord Buckhurst, attracted to enter the house only by the sight of Mr. Barnsley's carriage at the door, was already in the dressing-room, appealing to his aunt, with whom he felt assured of finding Margaret. While he came forward with inquiries after the night she had passed, and the state of her cough, the object of his visit contrived to slip

away unperceived ; and, after taking an affectionate leave of Helen, quitted the house.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Sullivan's emotion was too manifest to escape the notice of the young Marquis, and his inquiries gradually drew forth the true state of the case. His aunt, secluded from London rumours, was scarcely aware that even a common acquaintance subsisted between him and Margaret Barnsley. In the vehemence of her love for her dear Edward, it was impossible not to accuse Margaret of hard-heartedness,—of ingratitude.

“ Perhaps,” said Lord Buckhurst, watching the countenance of the invalid, “ perhaps, she may have formed some attachment?”

“ She does not even deny it !”—cried poor Mrs. Sullivan.”

Lord Buckhurst's eyes brightened.

“ She admits that since the period of Edward's proposals, she has become acquainted with some one to whom she accords a preference.”

“ Helen !” said Lord Buckhurst to his cousin, who was re-entering the room after having watched the departure of Margaret’s carriage, “ come and sit with your mother.—My aunt is agitated.—Try to make her compose herself.—I only came to inquire after you all.—I have an appointment this morning with Lady Walmer.—Good bye,—good bye !”

## CHAPTER XII.

Oh ! when meet *now*  
Such pairs, in love and mutual honour joined ?

MILTON.

THE Duke and Duchess of Grantville were persons chiefly remarkable for simplicity of mind ; and a prudent knowledge that, although endowed with means for the maintenance of their hereditary rank, they had not fortune to compete with certain British peers whose wealth raises them to the level of foreign sovereignty.

The father of his Grace, though only Marquis of Buckhurst, having discovered that Newmarket and White's were becoming too much for his patrimonial oaks, determined to see only so much of London as was inseparable from his duties of Master of the Horse ; and his son, when afterwards promoted a step higher in the peerage, had rather increased than disregarded the barriers set up by his predecessor, had married a woman of the same moderate views as himself, and devoted his days to domestic life and the country. “ One fine London entertainment,” he used to say in answer to the remonstrances of his eldest daughter, Lady Maria, “ would impoverish my household for six months. We can do good and make ourselves happy at Buckhurst ;—why parade our poverty in Park Lane ?”—

By a man of so much practical philosophy, Lady Lavinia’s marriage with her cousin Brereton was regarded as an excellent match ; and, had Lord Buckhurst chosen to

draw still closer the ties of consanguinity by an alliance with Helen, the consent of the Duke and Duchess would have been readily obtained. Helen was to inherit her mother's fortune of fifty thousand pounds; was unexceptionably amiable; and what more could they desire for their son?—The idea of putting up his son and coronet to be bid for in an heiress auction, never entered the honourable head of the Duke; and nothing more amazed him than the mingled hauteur and cupidity of his brother-in-law of Hawkurst Hill.

When, therefore, it was intimated to the Duchess of Grantville, in a letter from some officious London friend, that their son was desperately in love with the prettiest girl in London, only daughter of a member of parliament of large property in Kent, she congratulated herself and her husband with affectionate cordiality. The Duke being in indifferent health, charmed under the magnetizing rod of a homœopathic doctor in the neighbourhood

of Buckhurst Lodge, was passing the early part of the summer in Norfolk ; and thus, unable to interrogate Lord Buckhurst, he despatched a “ private and confidential ” letter to his friend Lord Walmer, begging him to inquire into the business, and let them know the result.

The Grantvilles could not have chanced upon a source of information more favourable to Margaret !—The Walmers had become attached to the beautiful girl who bore her faculties so meekly, and whom their utmost endeavours did not suffice to spoil. In Barnsley, they saw only *a vote* ;—a man of fortune, moreover, with a good flow of conversation for a dinner table, and a good dinner table for a flow of conversation. Lord Walmer did not hesitate to say,— (for he hesitated to say nothing that was dictated by his wife) that unless they wished Buckhurst to form a marriage of ambition, he could do nothing better than make a Marchioness of Margaret Barnsley.

Upon this hint, the Grantvilles wrote to

their son ; and evinced their gratitude to Lady Walmer, by entreating her to break the ground for them with the Barnsleys ; for Lady Walmer loved nothing in this life so well as a negotiation !—Diplomacy was her delight ; and in inditing the epistle to Lord Buckhurst appointing the morning after the ball at Devonshire House for an interview, she felt as magnanimously *grandiose* as Catherine II after founding a city,—or Christina, after stabbing the secretary she had robbed of his dispatches. Unob-servant of the agitation in which the young man rushed into her Blue Chamber fresh from his interview with Mrs. Sullivan, she entered into a mysterious preamble, long and unintelli-gible enough for the preliminaries of a treaty of peace ; and spoke of her exertions past, present, and to come, in removing doubts from the mind of his parents, and scruples from that of Barnsley, much as she might have described the prodigious movements of a hundred-horse power engine.

All, however, ended to the satisfaction of both parties. The Countess was enraptured to find herself intrusted with the negotiation of the affair, and the Marquis to have the weight thereof removed from his shoulders. All he wished was to gaze, and sigh, and whisper in the ear of Margaret. Lady Walmer was heartily welcome to squabble about settlements and pin-money with old Barnsley.

There was the opera that night—his usual place of weekly beatification. But Margaret had excused herself on account of the formal dinner party at home; and as there was no question of general or Kentish interest before the house, he felt that he could not reach even her father by strolling down to Palace Yard. Just about dinner time, however, as Buckhurst was sauntering on horseback along Curzon Street, for the twentieth time that day, he observed the cabriolet of Woodgate stop; and Sir Henry, black varnished and smil-

ing, jump out, equipped for dinner. The grand heraldic body coach of Lord Withamstead followed, crammed with Holloways and pomposity ; and never had the Duke-apparent so longed to be included in a dinner party, as in that stupid assemblage.

For the tribe of Holloway, ever dull, was not brightened by gilding !—Panic struck at finding himself refused by Helen Sullivan a few days previously to her father's fatal accident, George was perplexed whether to sink his pride and appropriate to his future title the reversion of the fertile acres of Stokeshill, or sink his avarice, and ennable himself with the hand of Lady Florence O'Callaghan, the daughter of a landless Irish Earl.

His weird sisters, were furious at the extraordinary greatness thrust upon the attorney's daughter, whom they had always threatened to patronize on their accession of rank ; and who, as the favourite of Lady Walmer and beloved of Lord Buckhurst, they were

forced to contemplate with upturned and wondering eyes ;—while poor old Lady Withamstead, withered by transportation from her natural soil and atmosphere, like some old vegetable moved too late in the season, felt, as she graphically expressed herself to Miss Winston, “neither here nor there ;” and was beginning to sigh for the days when it was not *infra dig*, to tax her housekeeper’s account, and squabble with the butler about the allowance of wine for the second table.

Woodgate, who with the utmost respect for the old squire of Withamstead, had very little patience for the new Lord of that name, came prepared for a disagreeable party. Recollecting the contemptuous air of superiority with which the two ancient damsels had over-powered Miss Barnsley in Kent, he so far reckoned on the frailty of the sex as to fear she would retaliate by flinging Almacks in their teeth, and dazzling them with the galvanic coruscations of fashion. But, to his

infinite satisfaction, the young lady was forbearing—not an allusion to Lady Walmer—not a sentence intending to drag on the Grantville chapter of her conquests. Margaret spoke of Withamstead, their own chief vantage ground; and would not stir out of Kent, which was certainly far from being her own. She talked to Miss Felicia of infant schools, and Miss Holloway of her botanical garden;—while the old lady crept unnoticed out of her suit of buckram, and maundered to poor Miss Winston about a celebrated Withamstead recipe for Chedder cheese. Gladly would George Holloway have doubled his deafness to escape the snatches of his mother's discourse, as they occasionally reached his ear; such as—“ Set your milk in a shallow glazed pan,”—or—“ Be sure to turn your cheeses when the weather is close.”—What a dissertation for a peeress of the realm!

In spite, however, of the tediousness of the party, Sir Henry, instead of adjourning from

the dinner table to the opera, according to his intention, found himself listening to Margaret's performance of some canzonets of Withers, at the express desire of Lord Withamstead, who loved young voices married to old music. Her singing, like her talking, was devoid of pretension ; and the old man was grateful to her for not flourishing over simple English ballads, after the false taste of the Drewes.

It was just at the conclusion of one of these madrigals, which had soothed the gentle George into a snore, and his father into pleasing reminiscences of the ancient music in his George-the-Thirdian days, that a note was brought in to Barnsley, which caused his eyes to twinkle with triumph ;—a note from the lady of the Right Honourable the Earl of Walmer, demanding at what hour it would be convenient for her to be received in Curzon Street on the morrow, for the transaction of some business of importance ; and, though his answer merely stated that all the hours of his

day, and all the days of his week were at her Ladyship's disposal, he made as great an effort to demand permission of Lady Withamstead and her daughter to retire and write it, as if the act rivalled in importance the signing of *Magna charta*.

His daughter neither expressed nor felt the slightest curiosity on the subject.—Sir Henry did her the justice of admiring that, amid the absurd demonstrations of her father, Margaret retained her serenity. He was almost as much surprised as pleased to observe that the flatteries of society, so apt to exercise a disadvantageous influence over the character of very young persons, had imparted to hers only the self-possession in which she had been so eminently wanting at their first encounter in the library of *Wynnex Abbey*.

After the Holloways had departed to their new and aristocratic home in Carlton Gardens, mortified to perceive how much their grandeur was lost upon people living in the very heart

of a society to the outskirts of which they scarcely dared append themselves, Barnsley communicated to his daughter the missive of Lady Walmer.

“ I dare say,” said he, “ she wants me to sound my friend Latitat, who manages the Cumberland interest at Felton?—”

“ I rather think, papa,” said Margaret, “ that Lady Walmer wishes to employ you as treasurer of the charity for merchant’s widows, to become her almoner, and receive her proxy.”

Miss Winston said nothing. A shrewd presentiment assured her that her happiness was in danger from some new proposal of marriage.

The following day, precisely at the appointed hour of one, appeared Lady Walmer, beautiful, high-bred, well-intentioned ; but marring all by the fussy air of flurrying officiousness, intended to mark to the world that it could not possibly get on without her. Her mission

with the Barnsleys, for instance, was of a nature calculated to give pleasure to herself and them ; yet she could not help deteriorating her good services by a preliminary discourse, of which here and there a word bitterly humiliated the pride of her auditor. She said things in the name of the worthy Grantvilles, which they would not have said for themselves ; and, on the whole, at the close of her lengthy oration, Barnsley felt rather affronted than pleased that his daughter was likely to become a Marchioness.

“ Of course, my dear Sir, you will empower me to state to the family what it is your intention to do for my charming young friend, and to what extent her fortune will be increased at your death. It cannot be expected that you should pledge yourself not to enter into a second marriage state. I should strongly advise you to go the utmost lengths, with the view to secure a connexion so beyond my utmost expectations for my *protégée*. I pro-

mised to do what I could for Miss Barnsley ; but I confess it did not enter my remotest calculations that I should marry her to the only son of the Duke of Grantville !”

“ My daughter, I am proud to admit, is greatly indebted to your Ladyship’s kindness, but——”

“ When the Duke arrives in town, (for an event so important in his family will probably bring him back to London,") interrupted Lady Walmer, attaching very little importance to any thing uttered by Barnsley, saving his “ ay” or “ no” in a division—“ I think I may venture to promise that Lord Walmer will be happy to undertake the necessary introduction between you ; meanwhile, as I must write by this day’s post to acquaint the Duke and Duchess of your gratified acceptance——

“ Will it not be better then for us to communicate immediately with my daughter ?”—interrupted Barnsley, in his turn, somewhat

startled by this precipitancy. “ I am entirely ignorant of Margaret’s dispositions towards Lord Buckhurst.”

“ Oh ! with respect to a young lady’s dispositions towards a handsome young man, the heir of a dukedom, we shall not, I apprehend, be kept in much suspense. However, now the proposal has been properly made to yourself, there can be no objection to mentioning it to Margaret. I can give you five minutes longer,” she continued, taking her Breguet from her bosom.—“ Pray, beg Miss Barnsley to let me speak a few words to her.”

Expecting such a summons, Margaret, with her simple white dress and glossy black hair arranged with simple, but scrupulous precision, was soon seated beside Lady Walmer, looking like a lily of the valley planted next a crown imperial. With all her deference towards the Countess, she could hardly refrain from a smile at the peremptory

terms in which Lady Walmer announced the immensity of her impending good fortune !

“ Let me be the first to congratulate you my dear,” said she, kissing the pure white forehead of her *protégée*, “ on an event which I am proud to attribute to the introduction to society I have been able to procure you. At present, no step need be taken on your part. For some time longer, the negotiations will pass through myself, the Duke of Grantville and your father; but the moment it becomes necessary for *you* to act I shall be extremely happy to make you *au fait* to the part it will be desirable for you to take in the business. It is true, I am just now sadly engaged, from having my sister, the Countess de la Fare in England, and Lord Walmer’s mother in town;—but you may count upon me, my dear Margaret, to give up to you a reasonable portion of my time in the

various perplexities and ceremonies in which you must necessarily be involved by the preliminaries of such a marriage."

Margaret saw that Lady Walmer considered *her* judgment as unimportant in accepting the proposals of the Marquis of Buckhurst, as her father had held it, eight months before, in refusing those of Edward Sullivan; and was for a moment puzzled in what terms to frame an elucidation of the business.

"I am fully aware of your Ladyship's kindness on this and other occasions," said she, at last. "But you greatly misapprehend my feelings toward Lord Buckhurst."

"Do not imagine, my love, that we wish to force you to confession,"—said Lady Walmer smiling with an air of significant superiority at Barnsley, in the idea that Margaret was about to favour them with a display of Missish prudery. "We do not wish you to commit yourself by a word on the subject more than you desire. Lord Buckhurst must extort from

you all he hopes to hear, after the more important preliminaries are adjusted."

"But it is to prevent this, dear Lady Walmer, that I intreat your interference," said Margaret, perceiving that she must speak plain to be understood. "As it is impossible for me to accept the proposal which the Duke of Grantville has condescended to sanction,—"

"*My dear!*"—cried her father, starting from the chair in which he had been impatiently listening to Lady Walmer's initiatory chapter; while the colour of the Countess, rising to her temples, made even her rouge look pale.

"I have never encouraged any particular attentions on the part of Lord Buckhurst," resumed Margaret.

"Certainly not," interrupted Lady Walmer. "I should not of course have permitted any thing of the kind. Still, I concluded that you duly appreciated the distinction and honour you were receiving at the hands of Lord Buckhurst."

“ Not to assume the vindication of the dignity of my sex,” said Margaret, with a smile which the Countess thought extremely impertinent,—“ let me only assure you that, till within the last week, I was ignorant Lord Buckhurst meant more in his attentions than twenty other young men with whom your Ladyship has done me the honour to make me acquainted. The family seemed so much to resent papa’s refusal of his cousin, Edward Sullivan, that—”

“ Edward Sullivan! — a younger son! — a beggar!” — cried Lady Walmer, with disgust.

“ Not *quite* a beggar, since by his father’s death, he has come into possession of the Brereton estates,” observed Margaret.

“ I fancy you are mistaken,” said Lady Walmer.

“ I repeat only what I learned from Mrs Sullivan.”

“ Are we to understand, then,” demanded her father, “ that the repugnance you seem disposed to assign as a motive for declining one

of the most brilliant matches in England, is caused by your preference of Mr. Sullivan, or Brereton,—or whatever we are now to call him ?”—

“ No, dear papa !” said Margaret. “ When you first refused Edward’s proposals, I did not allow myself to inquire what might *then* have been my inclinations on the subject. But I have lately repeated that refusal on my own account, without referring the proposal to yourself — being fully aware of your objections.”

“ You have again refused him ?”—cried her father, with a glance of triumph brightening his countenance.

“ I have, Sir.”

“ You are a fortunate young lady, my dear,” said Lady Walmer, with a supercilious smile, “ to have coronets and fortunes flung in this manner at your head !—But, permit me to tell you, that were you a daughter of mine to decline such opportunities —”

“ You would not, I am sure, press them on her acceptance, were she to tell you, as I do now, that they would be fatal to her happiness,” said Margaret, mildly, but with firmness.

“ At your age, how should you know what will conduce to your happiness?”—said Lady Walmer.

“ At my age, then, surely I am too young to marry?”—answered Margaret, more cheerfully.

“ In short,” cried Lady Walmer, rising and shaking her ruffled plumes, “ we are to understand that Miss Barnsley disinterestedly renounces a Duke of Grantville with twenty thousand a-year, and a Mr. Brereton with ten, for the sake of some more favourite swain,—some ensign in the guards,—or—”

“ Pray do not be angry with me, dear Lady Walmer!” said Margaret, trembling lest by degrees she should approach nearer to the truth.

“ Angry!—What pretensions have I to be angry?—I am not aware, Miss Barnsley, of any

tie between us sufficiently close to entitle me to be angry with any excess of absurdity of which you may choose to be guilty!—Mr. Barnsley,—do me the favour to ascertain whether my carriage is at the door!” continued the Countess.

“ My daughter will think better of all this; Margaret has not had time to give due consideration to a matter of so much importance,” remonstrated Barnsley, as he laid his hand upon the bell;—terrified lest his evanescent vision of a ducal coronet in his family, should so speedily disappear.

“ I beg I may have nothing further to do with the business!”—said Lady Walmer haughtily. “ All I undertook was to lay it before Miss Barnsley and her family, who have not even deigned to consult my opinion on the subject.—It only remains for me to submit their peremptory refusal to the Duke of Grantville.”

“ Surely, your Ladyship will favour me with a day’s delay?”—said Barnsley, intercedingly.

“ Surely it is not essential that his Grace’s answer should be dispatched by return of post? Surely he must have expected—”

“ He expected, probably, some small degree of consideration from Miss Margaret Barnsley,” said Lady Walmer,—standing considerably taller than usual.

“ Margaret will listen to reason!” — implored poor Barnsley; “ I am convinced Margaret will listen to reason!”

“ Not from *me*!” — cried Lady Walmer. “ *I* wash my hands of the business. I wish to hear no more of the matter! — Miss Barnsley may settle her affairs as she likes best.”

“ But what can she like better than a match such as this!” — cried Barnsley, almost beside himself. “ As your Ladyship justly observes, the only son of a duke—a charming young man, —a—”

“ I observed nothing of the kind, that I recollect,” said the Countess, her *hauteur* increasing as she contemplated the disagreeable cere-

mony of announcing to the Grantvilles the failure of her negotiation. “The carriage if you please!”—she continued, addressing the servants by whom the bell was now answered.

“Will you at least afford me the honour of a few minutes’ private conference?”—cried Barnsley, at his wit’s end.

“My dearest father,—you distress yourself to little purpose by any further consideration of this business,” said Margaret, attempting to take his hand as he followed Lady Walmer out of the room. “My mind is irrevocably made up. Nothing that can be said or urged, would induce me to accept Lord Buckhurst. I have to entreat that Lady Walmer will express to the Duke and Duchess of Grantville how fully I am sensible of their condescension in wishing to accept so obscure a person as myself for their daughter-in-law, but the honour would be thrown away upon me.”

“You have, then, some disgraceful attachment?”—

“ No, on my honour!—I have no disgraceful attachment,—no engagement,—no prospect of an engagement. But I do not wish to marry at present.”

And, by some strange inspiration, the truth at that moment flashed across the mind of John Barnsley.

## CHAPTER XIII.

To hear an open slander is a curse,  
But not to find an answer is a worse.

DRYDEN'S OVID.

IF the common herd of mankind are apt to mistake reverse of wrong for right, they are not less prone to hail an escape from beggary as opulence. From the moment the people of Stokeshill discovered that Sir Richard Woodgate had not left his grandson destitute, they decided that Sir Henry was in possession

of a handsome fortune ; and gave utterance to a thought to which their “ wish was father,” that he would certainly purchase back the family estates.

The Hawkinses and Abdys took care of course that this rumour should reach the ears of Barnsley ; hinting at the same time that the title had never been clearly made out, and that Sir Henry had only to refund the purchase, and restore himself to the possession of the property ; and, though Barnsley was too good a man of business to entertain the slightest alarm with respect to the title, an impression was left on his mind by the Stokes-hill wonder-mongers, that, by some extraordinary means, the Woodgates were once more in possession of a liberal fortune.

When it occurred to him, therefore, that his daughter’s repugnance to an alliance with Lord Buckhurst, arose from a predilection in favour of Sir Henry Woodgate, to whose conversation with himself he had observed her

devote considerable attention the preceding evening, he felt that many worse alternatives might have presented themselves. Mr. Barnsley could not bring himself to believe that Margaret's nature was so altered within a few short months, as to have become unamenable to his authority, and flattered himself she might still be coaxed into consenting to become a Duchess ; but if not, he made up his mind to look forward, without much anguish of spirit, to her becoming Lady Woodgate. No one could be more sensible than himself of the consequence of the Woodgate family. It had been his dream for forty years ; for twenty, his waking contemplation ; and, satisfied that Sir Henry would eagerly seize the occasion to repossess himself of the family estates, uniting might and right in the person of his own and Margaret's children,—he determined to make one strong effort in favour of the Duke of Grantville's son ; and, in the event of failure, devote his earliest attention to the

state of affairs between Margaret and his colleague.

Occasions were not wanting. In defiance of Lady Walmer's implied threats to dethrone Margaret from the eminence of fashion in which she had contributed to place her, Miss Barnsley had engagements over which the Countess exercised no influence, and in which her father could officiate as chaperon. The presence of the beauty of the season was too indispensable to the popularity of a ball, not to be courted at the expense of enduring the addition of so inoffensive a guest as Barnsley; nay, Margaret's fame of fashion was now so fully established, that even a Mrs. Dobbs, or a Mrs. Closeman, would have been cheerfully accepted as her chaperon.

Chaperons, however, even of the highest grade, were at her disposal. Lady Henry Marston, the great county rival of Lady Walmer, who had long found in Miss Barnsley's charms a popular theme for her exaggerated

displays of sensibility, no sooner ascertained from Barnsley's frequent appearance in public with his daughter that some breach had occurred between them and the Countess, than she seized the opportunity of enrolling these county neighbours in Lord Henry's faction, by offers of friendship and protection. The occasion was a tempting one to poor Margaret: she knew that Woodgate was the friend of Lord Henry, and a daily visitor at his house; but the enmity existing between the Walmers and Marstons was equally well known to her; and she was too high-minded to retaliate on the Countess, from whom she had received much kindness, her momentary petulance. It was difficult to escape Lady Henry, who languished every day to Curzon Street with offers of service; while the only way in which Margaret could try to discourage her attempts was the consistent and respectful gratitude with which she uniformly spoke of Lady Walmer.

“ Your friends, the Henry Marstons, I find,

are beginning to notice the Barnsleys?" observed Lady Walmer to Sir Henry Woodgate, as she turned towards him, one night at a ministerial party, in order to throw off the leaden weight which George Holloway had been fixing on her shoulders.

"Lady Henry has always admired Miss Barnsley; and Marston has a high opinion of her father," he replied, with indifference.

"And now the Barnsleys find it convenient to make up to them. Of course, Lady Henry is beginning to discover" —

"Pardon me for interrupting you to remark that I hear from Lady Henry nothing but complaints of the coldness with which her advances to the Barnsleys are received. To make up to any one is so much the most odious species of industry extant, that I cannot too eagerly exonerate Miss Barnsley from the charge. Miss Barnsley has a fine frank character which ought not to be misunderstood."

Lady Walmer, howbeit, by no means fond

of having her assertions contraverted, could not help feeling pleased to discover that her suspicions of Margaret, for whom she entertained a sincere regard, were groundless ; nor was Margaret less gratified when the Countess, flying towards her with an olive branch the moment she saw an open window in the ark, acquainted her, not only that the waters of strife had subsided, but that it was Sir Henry Woodgate, whose defence of her had reduced them to tranquillity.

“ How happy I am ! ” cried Margaret, when she related to Miss Winston this universal cessation of hostilities. “ We are all friends again ! —The evil influence of London is so often accused of producing frivolity, and depressing every nobler emotion ;—why do we say nothing of its power to soften animosities, and pacify quarrels ? People are too busy here to be good haters. Hatred is an inconvenience in London society ; it would make the women look ugly, and keep away the men from

pleasant dinner parties. In Kent, for want of better amusement, Lady Walmer would have found it impossible to renounce the petty vengeance she had vowed against me."

"It is not easy, I should think, to retain rancour against *you*, my dear Margery," said her friend, always ready to listen, and desirous to drop in a word of counsel when it could be done without officiousness. "All I have to pray is, that you will not repose too much trust on the friendship of those, whose likings and dislikings are grounded on the shifting sands of caprice."

"You would have liked Lady Walmer better then, had she continued her resentment?" said Margaret.

"To own the truth, my dear, I do not like her at all. But it would be absurd for me to pass sentence upon London people, whose conduct is regulated by a code I do not profess to understand. Ah, Margery!—I sometimes wish Mr. Barnsley had given you

at once to Edward Sullivan, that you might have settled safely and happily in the country, under the protection of a well-principled husband. The tumultuous world in which you are launching wider and wider, fills me with apprehensions."

"Apprehensions of what?"—inquired Margaret, replying with proper gravity to one who spoke so gravely.

"It is my ignorance of *what*, my dear, which causes my uneasiness. My notions of your danger are vague as they are painful. But I cannot feel happy to see you intimately associated with these irresponsible people, who treat vice as a jest, and sorrow as an importunity. Were any affliction to befall you—"

"It is not to them I should turn for consolation!"—cried Margaret, embracing her anxious friend. "I trust I do not allow the trivial influence of society to efface from my mind the duties of life; I am *sure* I shall not suffer it to supersede a friendship, which is

more to me than all the glitter and gorgeousness of London."

" My poor child !" exclaimed Miss Winston caressingly.

" But, pray, do not get into a habit of fancying that all the men I meet are knaves, or all the women fools," said Margaret.

" So far from it, that I think your Lady Walmer conceals under her mask of triviality a deep, artful nature ; and, as to Sir Henry Woodgate, I am not only of opinion that he has a heart, but a very hard one."

" That your first attempt at pleasantry should be calculated only to give me pain !" cried Margaret, colouring deeply. " But you are mistaken. Some day or other I will force you to admit that you are mistaken. We are all beginning perfectly to understand each other ; we—"

She was interrupted. Her father just then entered the room, in the highest spirits, to announce that, after a most satisfactory ex-

planation with Lady Walmer, who had called him into her carriage in St. James's Street, as he came out of Arthur's, all was once more upon velvet between the families. "On Thursday, my dear Margaret," he continued, "you are to accompany her to the drawing-room; and she insists upon my giving a ball next week, in order—"

"A ball?"—interrupted Margaret; "surely that is very unnecessary.—Half the people who invite *us* will feel it a liberty if we invite them in return. It is an effort that will give me no kind of pleasure; nor any one else whom I am anxious to please."

"Lady Walmer has not only taken it into her head that it is desirable, but undertakes all the trouble for us. She will send out the invitations, and give the necessary orders."

"She will entertain her friends, in short, in your house, at your expense! Pray, dear papa, do not consent to the plan!" cried Margaret, quite certain that the attempt would

expose them to the ridicule of Woodgate, and the impertinence of the Wynnex set.

“ My dear, it is already given. By this time, probably, Lady Walmer has engaged many people to come.”

“ In that case, we have only to make the best of it,” said Margaret. “ But I have observed that all these kind of attempts bring mortification and disappointment.”

Margaret was not fully aware of the extent of the truth she was asserting. From that day till the one when, according to newspaper announcements, “ Mr. and Miss Barnsley were to open their beautiful mansion in Curzon Street with a splendid entertainment,” she did not enjoy a moment’s tranquillity. Lady Walmer, though the project was exclusively her own, kept incessantly announcing that it would prove a failure; and, in her admonitions to the Barnsleys to be very careful in not issuing invitations to friends of their own, or of their own imagining, insisted so strongly on

the necessity of pacifying such and such animosities, and substantiating such and such connexions, that Miss Winston began to be of opinion that to form a cabinet, must be a much easier thing than to form a visiting list.

Even Margaret, who had enjoyed the gaieties of the season without thought or care, like a butterfly flitting from rose to lily, from lily to rose, could not help feeling that half her enjoyment of balls and breakfasts was destroyed by her insight into the laborious machinery with which the puppets are set in motion. She had hitherto fancied that these showy pageants were created by a touch of the enchanting wand of fashion ; and was shocked to discover how many tiresome notes and cards must be written, how many difficulties obviated, to satisfy the caprice of musicians, confectioners, and nurserymen ;—that the leader must have double scope for the flourish of his bow, and Gunter a comfortable

whereabout for his ice-pails and pitchers. Sick at heart of the very name of ball, it was indeed a relief to escape the fussy documentations of Lady Walmer, mount her favourite Khaled, and accompany her father in his stroll along the verdant skirts of Kensington Gardens, or the cool shore of the Serpentine.

With them, almost daily, rode Sir Henry Woodgate!—Lord Buckhurst was scarcely less assiduous than before,—the Duke of Caserta often escorted her.—Hundreds of London men, who had formed an acquaintance with Barnsley at the House or his club, in hopes of an introduction to the lovely girl, at whose entrance into Lady Walmer's opera-box the eyes of the whole pit were turned in admiration,—joined them in succession; and Parson Drewe, whose professional duties at Tat's, invariably carried his knowing cob into the thick of the fashionable throng, could not forbear exclaiming to his swell crew as the Barnsleys rode past:

“ Lord!—how easily Brummagem counter-

feits get into circulation ! Gild your brass thick enough, and 'tis soon worth twenty shillings in the pound."

" Does not Miss Woodgate find her time pass heavily at Ghent, now you are settled in London ?" inquired Margaret, one day, when they had extended their ride as far as Richmond Park.

" I think she does," said Sir Henry, gratified at hearing the fashionable beauty revert to his family affairs ; " I think it, because the lady doth protest too much.—Agnes takes such pains to assure me that she is well and happy—never better, never happier—that I am convinced she is getting a little weary of solitude."

" Why do you not persuade her to settle in England ?"

" She has so few connexions in England !—My mother, her only relative, is fixed for life in the Netherlands."

" But, in Kent,—near Westerton, for in-

stance,—Miss Woodgate has so many friends who remember her with interest?"

"Kent is forbidden ground," said Sir Henry, gravely. "My aunt has too much soul to endure the vicinity of Stokeshill."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Margaret, with feeling; "for *there* lives one who is warmly disposed to admire and respect her."

"You offer an irresistible encouragement, I admit!" said Woodgate, greatly touched by the cordiality of Miss Barnsley's tone. "I thank you for my aunt, and I trust no very great length of time will elapse before she thanks you for herself."

Margaret dared not venture on the interrogation that presented itself; but, after a short pause, Sir Henry resumed:

"Agnes had made up her mind to complete the term for which my grandfather engaged the hotel where they so long resided; but circumstances may possibly induce her,—the projects of happiness I have permitted

myself to form, and which, if realized, no one will witness with so much satisfaction as herself, may shortly determine her to give up Ghent."

Margaret's respiration was too much impeded to reply.

"I should, in fact, scarcely know what to make of happiness," continued Woodgate, after another pause, "if it were to be enjoyed at a distance from one who has been more than parent to me, more than sister, more than friend! My poor aunt's early days appear to have been darkened by the severity of her family; it belongs to me to repay to her old age the happiness she has lost.—The idea of even the happiest marriage would be imperfect, if I did not feel persuaded that the woman who loves me well enough to deign to become my wife, will take part in my feelings of gratitude towards Agnes Woodgate."

He paused, evidently for an answer; but Margaret had not courage to attempt one.

“ Do you think it likely,” said he, turning pointedly towards her, “ (for it is a question no one can answer better than yourself,) that my wife will be jealous of this old-fashioned attachment of mine ?”—

“ She would be unworthy of your affection, if she were so,” said Miss Barnsley.

“ I have heard that it is impossible for two women, not sisters, to live on good terms in the same house”—

“ I should think it equally impossible to quarrel with an inmate so amiable as Miss Woodgate.”

“ You always appear to me to be acquainted with Agnes,” cried Sir Henry. “ No one has ever spoken to me of her with so much interest as yourself !”—

“ No one, out of her own family, knows her so well.—You forget what opportunities I have had of hearing tributes to her excellence at Stokeshill. After twenty years’

absence, she is still beloved in the village as though she left it yesterday."

" Yet how apt we are to call the poor ungrateful!"—cried Woodgate; not understanding how much of this enthusiasm for his family had been assumed with a view to mortify the Barnsleys.

" Since I was at Withamstead with you in the winter," continued Margaret, " I have inquired more about the sad history to which the Withamsteads alluded. I believe there never was an instance in which family interference went further to produce misery on one side,—on the other, death."

" You allude to the clergyman, to whom Agnes is said to have formed a girlish attachment?" said Sir Henry, relapsing into coldness, the moment Stokeshill was mentioned, and drawing up into stiffness at the notion of anything that compromised the dignity of the Woodgates.

“ To the clergyman who died of a broken heart soon after your family went abroad.”

“ I fancy there was much exaggeration in the statement of the Holloways,” observed Sir Henry; and he took advantage of the departure of Lord Henry Marston, who was riding a short distance behind them with Barnsley, to engage the latter in conversation, by bringing forward the discussion of some political question involving calculations which soon placed the dot-and-carry-one acquirements of the man of business in request.

“ If time should ever realize my wild visions,” thought Margaret, as the two members launched together into their millions and tens of millions, “ I must try to root up the upas tree of family pride which poisons his whole character. When he has once brought down his haughty spirit to love *me*,—*me*,—he cannot but humanize into a kindlier spirit towards

his fellow creatures. His Woodgateism is the most unchristian-like of passions ; but with such powers of mind and such warmth of heart, how easy to make him sensible of the failing!"

Yes !—every thing appeared easy to her now ! She had overcome so many difficulties. The proud man—the cold man—the harsh man—was all but her declared lover. In whatever society they met, it was to her side he directed his steps ; it was her conversation he sought ; it was her smile which rejoiced him. He seemed labouring to make himself acquainted with all her sentiments, all her opinions, and when these, as was often the case, were at variance with his own, nothing could exceed the earnest moderation with which he argued with her, and encouraged her to the unreserved development of her powers of mind. Margaret was superlatively happy. If still in some degree uncertain of his attachment, she could

not doubt his good opinion, his good will. Young as she was, he respected her; and she felt that he would not have respected her had he entertained disparaging sentiments concerning her father.

## C H A P T E R XIV.

Sweet love!—sweet lines!—sweet life!  
Here is his hand, the agent of his heart,  
Here is his oath for love, his honour's pawn;  
Oh! that my father would applaud his love  
To seal our happiness.

SHAKSPEARE.

“ IF this troublesome ill-advised ball were but over,” groaned Margaret to her friend Miss Winston,—as she laid aside a note from Lady Walmer, the third she had received that morning from the Countess,—informing her,

that she should visit her in an hour or two, with a certain Lady Catalpa, whose request to be introduced to the Barnsleys and obtain an invitation, she had been unable to refuse.

“ But pray remember, my dear,” wrote the finessing fine lady, “ that whatever I say or do, you must remain firm to your text that your list is closed, that you have refused hundreds, and cannot send out another card. You must on no account have this Lady Catalpa! She is one of the questionables, whom her late husband’s standing in the political world caused to be received in a few ministerial houses; but who must not be seen in one at present, so insufficiently established in fashion as your father’s.”

“ To think,” cried Margaret throwing the note aside, after having received it back from Miss Winston, “ that any one should find it worth while to descend to manœuvres and

humiliations about a ball, to which I would not stoop for an empire."

" And this Lady Catalpa ?" inquired the good woman, who was even more shocked than Margaret, at the lessons of dissimulation her pupil was receiving.

" A woman of infamous character," cried Miss Barnsley. " Sir Henry Woodgate assures me, he remembers the time when it would have been an insult to pronounce her name in female society ; but, by dint of adroit manœuvring and prodigious cant, she has edged herself into, not actually the acceptance of society, but a sort of make believe place, by which she deceives many as to the extent of her influence. No decent woman was ever seen to enter her house ; where Lord Shoreham and other young men of his stamp have formed a coterie of a very free and easy kind, the members of which are avoided in Lady Walmer's society as if they had escaped from quarantine.

“ And such a woman Lady Walmer is about to introduce *here* ?”

“ Lady Walmer has not moral courage to hazard the resentment of one who numbers influential votes among her victims, just as I am not brave enough to close my father’s doors against them both.”

“ Let us take a drive,” said poor Miss Winston, in despair. “ There is surely no occasion for you to remain at home all day, because Lady Walmer threatens you with the visit of a woman to whom she desires you to be uncivil ?”—

“ Willingly. We shall escape the noise of the upholsterers, who are taking up the carpets in the drawing-rooms,” said Margaret. “ How lucky that my father should have so much committee-business on his hands, and escape all this inconvenience.”

On their return home, however, from a scorching drive in the shadeless Regent’s Park, Margaret regretted that she had not stayed

at home to face the enemy; for the note of refusal to Lady Catalpa, was still to be written, and, among the cards of callers, during their absence, was that of Sir Henry Woodgate.

“ What could he want?—Not to excuse himself for to-morrow night, I trust!”—thought Margaret, mechanically opening, one after another, a dozen notes of entreaties for cards for the ball;—one from a lady who had promised her son, who had promised his cousin, who had promised Captain Currycomb of the Life-Guards, to procure him an invitation (by way of cavalier to Lady Catalpa); another for Lady Henry Marston, begging leave to bring with her the fiftieth cousin of her pet poet; another from Felicia Holloway, entreating in the behalf of Lady Florinda O’Callaghan—“ a charming young woman whom we hope shortly to hail by a dearer title,”—and so forth through the rest.

“ Perhaps he wishes to get some friend invited?—But no!—he is above interesting

himself in such things!" thought Margaret, still pondering over Woodgate's visit.

Her curiosity was still more powerfully excited when, on the morrow, in the midst of a confusion in the fête-giving household, which necessarily caused the door to be closed against morning visitors, she found that he had called again.

"He *must* want to ask for an invitation for some person or other!" cried Margaret, "How strange that he does not write! I am half inclined to envelop a blank card to his address. But no!—why should I relax from my own dignity by an anticipation of his wishes?—If too proud to ask, he must do without it."

When night approached, however, she regretted her own obduracy, when, on entering the rooms, ornamented with pyramids of exotics and streaming with floods of light, she saw that the fête would be exquisite. Lady Walmer was considered to excel in the art of

ball-giving ; and had been quite as exclusive and impertinent, when acting on behalf of the Barnsleys, as on her own. And if, after the temporary-room ~~and~~ gauze-partitioning — the garlands of geraniums and invisible orchestra, —if after all—the one person whose presence constituted for Margaret the attraction of the evening, should absent himself,—how worse than useless was all this cost and care !—

Arranged in a simple white ball dress, without a trinket—without a flower,—ornamented only by the flush of delight that mantled upon her pure cheek, Margaret stood before her father, prepared for the reception of their guests ; and instinctively Miss Winston and Barnsley exchanged looks which expressed, “ who can wonder that so lovely a creature should command such universal attention !”—Both were very happy that night : the poor governess at seeing her child, her pupil, her creation, doing the honours of a noble fête with graceful ease to all that was

most distinguished in society ;—and Barnsley in assigning to the exclusive Countess of Walmer the place of honour at his ball, to enable her to welcome her acquaintance to his house with perfect convenience to herself. At every moment, indeed, his gratification increased !—Peers, ministers, ambassadors, were successively announced ; and not even Monsieur Jourdain could have more fervently luxuriated in his debasing aggrandizement.

Margaret was the only one of the family not thoroughly satisfied. The ball was excellent. She would have enjoyed it to her heart's content in the house of any other person. But she felt the degradation of Lady Walmer's patronage, in the eminence of the society collected around her. What right had she and her father to be receiving all these dukes and duchesses,—these secretaries of state and masters of the rolls ?—What would Sir Henry Woodgate think of them, if he made his appearance and found them surrounded by lords and ladies

whom she scarcely knew by sight?—That they were pitiful people, eager to creep out of their own class of society into a caste which contemplated them much as the Wynnex harriers regarded the whipper-in's cropped-eared cur, when it managed to sneak into their aristocratic kennel.

When he *did* arrive, however, no trace of dissatisfaction or displeasure was discernible. Whether agreeably excited by the stirring music of the Coldstream band, which, per favour of little Quickset, played martial airs in the hall between the dances; or delighted by the brilliant coup d'œil displayed in the ball-room, certain it was, that never had the brow of Woodgate been so benificially unbent, never his countenance so joyous or his tone so soft, as when he returned the greeting of Margaret and the imperial recognition of Lady Walmer. Barnsley himself did not look happier. He was all gravity,—all self-gratulation!

“ I'm afraid you won't dance with me to-

night?"—said he, drawing Margaret a little aside, with startling familiarity. "Do if you can,—I have something to say to you."

"*Something to say to her!*" Sir Henry Woodgate had something to say to her!—The idol of Stokeshill, Westerton, Brussels, Ghent, and the whole female sex, from Nurse Molyneux to Lady Henry Marston,—he, on whom she had set her heart, her mind, her hopes, her brilliant destinies,—was probably about to breathe that one word indispensable to sanction her disinterested projects in his favour; that word which she had heard from the noble, the wealthy, the brilliant, and the accomplished, with indifference; that word which she had silenced on the lips of the heir of the Duke of Grantville, and trembled for joy to anticipate from those of the ruined outcast of Stokeshill Place.

"Margaret!—the Duchess of Lancashire looking for a seat! Margaret! the Duke of

Caserta offering you an ice ! Margaret ! Baron Nebuchadnezzar Salfiore asking you to dance !” cried Barnsley, every now and then, in the ear of his bewildered daughter ; who was too profoundly absorbed by her own reflections, to take heed of the Jewish Baron or the Neapolitan Duke.

“ Margaret,” whispered Miss Winston when, in the course of the evening, she sought out the good woman who, in a corner, secluded from draughts of air, and calculated to conceal from observation the turban and satin dress in which her pupil had insisted on arraying her, sat labouring to keep Lady Withamstead awake,—“ Dear Margaret ! the sight of your triumphant countenance alarms me !—You look *too* happy, child !—I tremble for you !”—

“ I *am* happy—*too* happy !” replied Margaret, returning the fervent pressure of her hand ; but Lady Withamstead’s snooze did not

appear sufficiently absorbing to admit of acquainting one to whom all her thoughts were open, that Sir Henry at the conclusion of the quadrille they had danced together, had managed to get her away from observation into the temporary conservatory, and place a letter in her hand, which was now concealed in her bosom!

“ When you have perused it,” was his accompanying whisper, “ you will guess how often, how very often, I have longed to confide to you the declaration it contains. I called yesterday for that purpose, hoping to find you alone,—again to-day.—For a time, indeed, the broken conditions of my fortunes forbade me to aspire to a happiness, as much above my pretensions as my hopes. But an unlooked for accession of income at length affords me the hope of accelerating an event, on which depends the happiness or wretchedness of my future life.”

“ Vot beautiful flowersh, Meesh Barnsley,” interrupted Baron Nebuchadnezzar, who stood

near them unobserved in the conservatory ; “ oranches and lemonsh, in ploom I declare ! Vere do you puy theshe handsome treeshe ? or do you hire them for the day at a per shentage ? ” —

“ I am sorry I cannot inform you ; Lady Walmer is mistress of the ceremonies here to-night,” said Margaret.

“ Aha ! Lady Valmer ? Den they are bought and paid for drou de noshe ! ” — cried Baron Nebuchadnezzar. “ Vor my fader’s pall vot he cave do de allied shovereignsh at Vienna, a forrests of oranches and lemonsh vas hired, von vid de oder, not mosh abofe den guineash de outset.”

When Margaret could disengage her attention from the premier Baron of Jewry, Woodgate was gone—departed,—vanished like a dream. But eagerly as she longed to vanish, also, and dearly as she knew her future fate to be involved in the contents of the letter she had slipped within the foldings of her

dress, she was forced to smile—to play the courteous hostess,—to feel honoured by the opportunity of treading on the gouty toe of Lord Evergreen,—or commiserate the horrors of Lady Henry Marston who “felt convinced, nay, pretty nearly sure, that there was noyeau in the ice, of which she had swallowed half a spoonful,—noyeau, which every homœopathist eschews as prussic acid !”—

Unluckily, too, the ball was brilliantly successful. If every one had wanted to come, no one wanted to go away. Waltz succeeded to quadrille, quadrille to waltz ; and the galoppe intervening, only imparted fresh spirit to the dancers for more waltzes,—more quadrilles.— A few of the very few elderly chaperons tolerated by Lady Walmer, sat nodding in different corners, pretending to keep time to the orchestra, which they accompanied with the running base of a gentle snore. When the eternal cotillon struck up, daylight peeped in at the windows, and the yawning servants at

the doors, as if to hint that, as there is a time for all things ; for all things there should also be an end.

“ This, I hope, is the last dance ? ”—inquired Barnsley of Margaret, as he passed behind her in the circle ; and his daughter, turning round, could not help perceiving that her father looked exceedingly weary of his company, considering how many magnificent individuals it still comprehended.

“ Yes, papa,—the *cotillon* is always the last dance,—but it generally lasts long. The other night at Lady Henry’s, more than an hour ! ”

“ Couldn’t you contrive to shorten it, my dear ? —I want so deucedly to get away ! ”—

So did Margaret ; yet she could suggest nothing but patience. The Duke of Caserta was leading the *cotillon* with Jessie Devereux ; it was impossible to interfere with the lengthiness of the ridiculous figures they amused themselves by perpetrating.

“ I dare say, it will not last above half an

hour longer," said Margaret to her father; "after which, they will all go into the refreshment-room for five minutes, and away, as quick as their carriages can come up."

"Lady Walmer is not gone, is she?"—

"No, papa;—the pink feathers you see waving yonder in the conservatory are in Lady Walmer's hat."

"In that case, I really think I may leave you?"—

"Certainly, if you are so much tired. You can get away by the backstairs."

"My dear, I am not going to bed. I have a post-chaise waiting for me at the corner of Stanhope Street. I am going out of town on urgent business.—Hush! not a word!—take no notice—and I'm off."—

And Barnsley glided out of the room.

"Out of town on urgent business?"—Whither?—To Westerton?—To Stokeshill?—on business perhaps connected with, or connecting

him with Woodgate? Yet she was debarred of all opportunity of even hinting to her father of the state of affairs between herself and Sir Henry! Oh! the tune of that tiresome cotillon! —when would its monotonous sing-song drone itself into silence. One by one, the couples stole off to the cloak room. The circle was reduced from thirty couples to thirteen; but those thirteen seemed possessed by the spell of the seven dancing Princesses in the story!—There was a degree of energy in their waltz, of indefatigability in their *pas-de-bourrées*, which wound up Margaret's impatience to the uttermost. She saw clearly there was no getting rid of them. Little Quickset of the Guards was dancing with a Welsh heiress; Baron Nebuchadnezzar with a rich widow, whom he was trying to cajole into a constituent of the house of Salfiore, Manasses, Levi and Co.;—and Margaret, amid all her vexations, was not a little amused to hear him reciting to

his partner, “ vot a vonderful fall dere had been in Spanish!—a vasht many smashes in de shity.”—

At length, satin pelerines were called for, and cloth-sho  s. Coachmen as fast asleep as Lady Withamstead, were roused upon their boxes. Every one departed or was on the point of going; and a very low “ thank Heaven,” burst from the lips of the young hostess!—With some difficulty, she found a civil word to answer to the facetious last good night of the little ensign, who was blocking up the doorway in an attitude and preventing the exit of the fiddlers with their green bags.

“ Where is Mr. Barnsley?” inquired Miss Winston, no longer able to repress the tendency to a gaping fit induced by seven hours of small talk, from ten at night till five in the morning

“ Gone out of town!” said Margaret, thinking only of her letter, as she mechanically accepted from the hand of Lawton the lighted

bed room candle, to which increasing day light bade a laughing defiance.

“ *Out of town!*” ejaculated Miss Winston, aghast. “ My dear!—you must be dreaming!”—

“ No wonder,—for I am almost asleep,” said Margaret, hobbling wearily up stairs, closely followed by the governess. “ But he *is* gone;—to Westerton, I fancy. I had not time to ask him where.”

“ Surely it was a most extraordinary freak?”—demanded Miss Winston, roused up in proportion as her young companion seemed growing sleepy. “ To leave his company,—his friends—”

“ Lady Walmer’s friends”—corrected Margaret.

“ At all events, the persons Mr. Barnsley was entertaining;—and to go no one knows whither, no one knows why—”

“ I should have known both, had I been able

to catch what he said while the *cotillon* was hurrying on, and that horrible *cornet à piston* shaking the walls of the house. At all events, we shall learn to-morrow, or to-day I ought to call it.—Good morning, dearest friend. A kiss at parting on the happiest day of my life!"

"And after the weariest night," added Miss Winston, tenderly embracing her at the door of her room. "Do not dawdle, dear Margery,—don't curl your hair. I am afraid you will be sadly apt to take cold."

Margaret at present took nothing,—but the letter out of her bosom! The door was already locked,—the maid not yet rung for. If she had not time to examine Sir Henry's epistle, she might at least run her delighted eye over the contents; and, throwing herself into her great chair, she tore open the envelope!—What was her mortification to perceive that the letter she had been wearing next her heart, was *not* from Sir Henry at all!—It was in the hand-

writing of Helen Sullivan!—There must be some mistake.—He must have given her the wrong letter; for if her eyes were deceiving her, her ears certainly had not. There was no mistaking the meaning of Woodgate's pointed appeal to her feelings.

The perusal of the letter would unravel the mystery.—With aching eyes, accordingly, and a throbbing heart, Margaret read as follows.—

“ Had you not quitted our house so precipitately, my dearest Margaret, the other day on my cousin Buckhurst's arrival, I was about to claim your congratulations on an event in which I feel sure that none of my friends will sympathize more warmly than yourself. My poor dear mother, sensible of her approaching end, has at length given her consent to my marriage with Sir Henry Woodgate; to whom, (as you have probably long suspected) my affections have been pledged for years. The reluctance of my family to see me form an alliance

less brilliant on the score of fortune than they might desire, has lately been obviated ; and, as Sir Henry consents to remain the inmate of my mother so long as her life is spared, all objections are at an end. In September (when six months after my father's death will have elapsed,) I shall entreat, under a new name, the continuance of your friendship.

“ I am afraid, my dear Margaret, that poor Woodgate's desire to pass the moments of our separation in the society of those who could sympathize in his affection for me, has caused him to appear importunate. He says you have borne with him like an angel ; and that although the temptation of an opportunity to talk about “ Helen” has caused him to inflict his company without mercy, you have pardoned his tediousness in favour of his partiality to your friend. Eager to thank you for this goodness, Sir Henry insists that I shall lose no further time in acquainting you with our engagement, and mak-

ing an appeal to your future friendship in favour of both.

“ My mother begs me to offer her best regards. Poor Edward is at Baden with the Drewes.

“ Ever, dearest Margaret,

“ Affectionately yours,

“ H. S.”

Having reached the last syllable of this overwhelming communication, Margaret sat many minutes motionless, without the power of thought or action. Her first idea was to misdoubt the evidence of her senses, and recommence the perusal of the letter. She fancied her powers of mind were affected,—she read here and there a word ;—her thoughts became perplexed ;—she raised her hand to the forehead on which a cold dew was rising,—she placed it on her heart, of which the throbbing palpitation had changed to a deadly torpor.

*There* all was still ;—while in her poor perplexed brain, a thousand struggling thoughts were contending for mastery !

He was lost to her then,—or rather, he had never been *hers*,—had never loved her,—never entertained a thought of raising her to his bosom as a wife !—He had borne with her and her father, to talk to them of the object of his affections,—the object to whom he was about to devote his life !—Having now obtained the sanction of the Sullivans, to *them* he would be nothing further,—perhaps enter their doors no more,—perhaps resume his detestation of them as the owners of Stokes-hill !—

In that first moment of anguish, Margaret felt that she had not strength to endure all this ! Her confidence had been too sanguine, her disappointment was proportionably bitter. Not only she must resign her prospects of happiness, but see the manly affections of Sir Henry Woodgate concentered

in another ! Her very soul seemed sinking within her ; the world was disappearing from her view. Had she not clung to the chair which appeared to be rocking beneath her, she must have fallen senseless on the floor.

At length she recovered strength to snatch a glass of water, which for a moment revived her ; and, at that moment, the voice of Gladstone was heard at the door begging she might be admitted to undress her young lady. Expose herself to observation in her present state of bewilderment, she would not ; and, having desired Gladstone to go to bed, as she had already undressed herself, and was lying down, Margaret returned to the re-perusal of Helen Sullivan's letter. She was now able to deliberate upon all its terms and expressions. She now noticed that it was by Sir Henry's desire this tardy intelligence of their attachment was conveyed. Sir Henry wished her to know that he was an engaged man. Sir Henry wished to prevent the possibility

of her forming plans for his entanglement,—no! not the *possibility* of her forming them: he had seen all,—he knew all,—he felt that she loved him,—he saw that she wanted him to marry her:—that the Barnsleys of Stokeshill wished to sanctify their usurpation by an alliance with the Woodgates;—and seeing all this,—he had thought fit to warn them of his pre-engagement!

What a stroke for the high-mindedness of Margaret Barnsley!—The stagnant blood now coursed again like lightning through her veins!—The chill of her shivering frame thrilled with the excitement of fever. “I shall go mad!”—she exclaimed, pressing her hand frantically to her burning head. “And I must not go mad,—or I shall betray myself!—I shall degrade myself—I shall tell all!—Every one will learn that I love a man who despises me;—that I have been rejected—admonished! No,—oh, no!—I must not go mad!—Merciful Heaven preserve me in my right senses!”

She leaned back in her chair, revolving and re-revolving every thing that had passed;—every word she had uttered to Woodgate, every word heard from his lips—from the first moments of their acquaintance; and absorbed by these contemplations, the minutes—the hours wore on. London awoke with its tumults. While a single overwhelming idea possessed the soul of Margaret, the thousand perplexities of life set the world around her again in movement.

At length, Miss Winston, disturbed in her rest by a fear that Margaret had over exerted herself the preceding night, and might suffer from her efforts, came gently to her chamber door; and alarmed by the unusual circumstance of finding it locked, called in a low voice upon her pupil's name.

To refuse admittance to that best of friends was impossible. Margaret gently undid the bolt; and the consternation of the poor woman, who was in her dressing-gown, on finding

Margaret, at almost noon-day, still arrayed in her satin and blonde of the preceding night, took from her the power of utterance. A second glance revealed the haggard looks, the horror-struck expression of Margaret's eyes, and the leaden hue produced by stagnation of blood. Miss Winston saw that something terrible had happened; and reverting to Barnsley's mysterious departure the preceding night, could only find strength to falter out:

“ My dear Margaret, your father?”—

The smile with which Margaret strove to treasure her friend's apprehensions on that head, was a piteous effort. But conscious of the impossibility of detailing what had passed, she contented herself with placing in the hands of Miss Winston the letter of Helen Sullivan; fixing her eager eyes on her countenance as she read, and trying to imbibe the spontaneous demonstration of a sympathy, which, precious as it was, she had not courage to hear audibly expressed.

More calm of soul than Margaret, a single perusal enabled Miss Winston to comprehend the full purport of the communication; nay, to appreciate in its utmost force, the terrible anguish it must have inflicted. Instead of masking her words in common-place consolation, she folded Margaret fervently in her arms,—her young, faultless, sorrowful Margaret;—wept over her in silence, as a mother yearning over her child; and, aware of the especial bent of her pupil's character, contented herself with whispering:

“ Margaret,—you must not forget your father!”

A start from the exhausted frame she was embracing, convinced her that the exhortation had struck home. Not a word more passed between them. Margaret suffered her friend to undress her—arrange her night-clothes—assist her into bed—draw the curtains closely round—and station herself in a chair by the bedside, as she had been accustomed to do

during the poor girl's illness at Wynnex. Margaret's troubles, however, were greater now;—a heavier dispensation was upon her, and, extending her hand in search of the motherly hand to which she owed so much,—she placed her cheek upon it, and like a suffering infant, moaned herself to sleep.

That such a state should be called sleep!—a state of such perturbation,—such agony;—when, as her will and reason became subjected to the perplexities of dreams,—she fancied Woodgate was presenting Helen to her, arrayed in her bridal dress;—that Edward Sullivan was triumphing over her despair;—that Lady Walmer, Lord Shoreham, the Holloways, all her acquaintance, were deriding her with taunts and mockeries. Every now and then, she started up to shake off these painful delusions. But the extreme fatigue of the two preceding days, was happily too much for her; and having been soothed again upon her pillow by her companion, she sank at length into

that heavy slumber which beneficent nature seems to have reserved for the over-wrought sensibilities of the afflicted.

END OF VOL. II.

L O N D O N .

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